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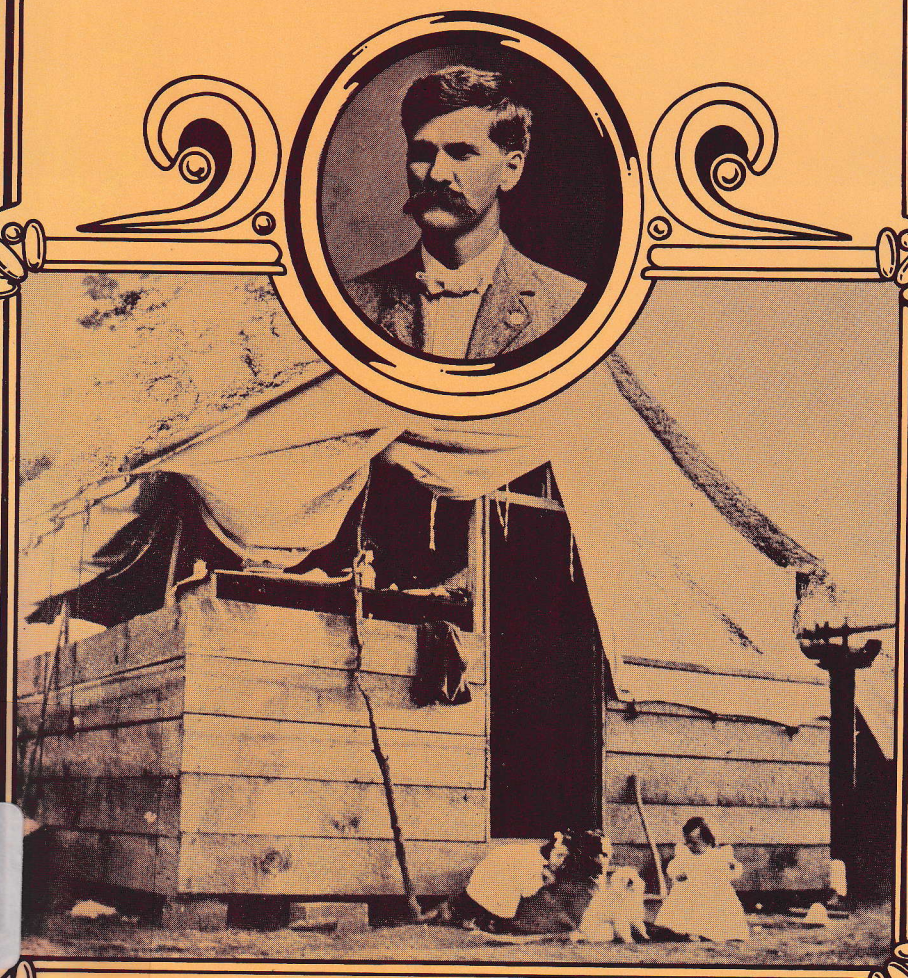
CAP GATES'S
TENT CITY

A HISTORY OF CROSSETT, ARKANSAS
BY JOHN W. BUCKNER



Cap Gates, an enterprising lumberman, moved to the wilds of south Ashley County and carved out a lumber mill whose workers lived in tents until they could build frame houses. This "Tent City," erected in 1899, turned into the thriving papermill town of Crossett.

Cap Gates was more than a businessman. He took a deep interest in the young community he founded and established Crossett's first church, school, store and myriad other institutions critical to the city's development. John W. Buckner, a long-time resident and author of an earlier Crossett history entitled *Wilderness Lady*, chronicles the founding of the town and the crucial developments of the early years.

Crossett's most beloved institutions are described. In the chapter "Railroad Romance" Buckner explores the legend of the Light that has flitted so mysteriously for many years on the railroad tracks east of town. The author traces the origin of the annual Rodeo and its emergence into a major regional attraction.

Crossett once had an outstanding baseball team called the Millers that drew thousands of fans every summer. The Rose Inn, perhaps the city's best known landmark outside the papermill, had a colorful history that included burning to the ground, rebuilding and demolition.

After Cap Gates, Crossett's most influential figure was probably D. C. Hastings, the long-time superintendent who established the foundation for one of Arkansas's finest school systems. Buckner recounts the development of the Crossett schools and the massive financial support provided by the Crossett Company.

Buckner combines solid historical facts with nostalgic anecdotes from interviews with those who helped shape Crossett over the years. Some of the highlights of the book are provided by more than 50 rare photographs, many of them never published previously.

Very sincerely yours

J. M. Buckner

12/6/83

Cap Gates's Tent City

by
John Wordy Buckner

Rose Publishing Company
Little Rock, Arkansas

T 27227

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Library of Congress Card Catalogue No. 83-61974
ISBN No. 0-914546-48-1

Dedicated to
Juanita Rainwater Buckner
for her love and untiring suppo
and for aiding in indexing.

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Acknowledgements

The author is grateful for the aid numerous people have given in the writing of this little book about Crossett. Mrs. Buckner, head Librarian for the Paul Sullins Library and the author's wife, has been most helpful in almost every phase of the writing.

The Georgia Pacific corporation has loaned valuable material and Mr. Norman Brown and Mr. John Turner have lent valuable advice and materials.

Mrs. Jody Brookings typed the manuscript with much patience and great skill. Special thanks also go to Mrs. Nell Owen and Mrs. Dolly Pruitt for kind words and a thousand helpful acts in preparation of the original manuscript. Thanks also go to Mr. Neil Young of First South Savings and Loan Association for material assistance.

And we give very special thanks to our six children for their unqualified support and prayers: Martha, Luther, Jimmy, Wordy, Dottie and Helen.

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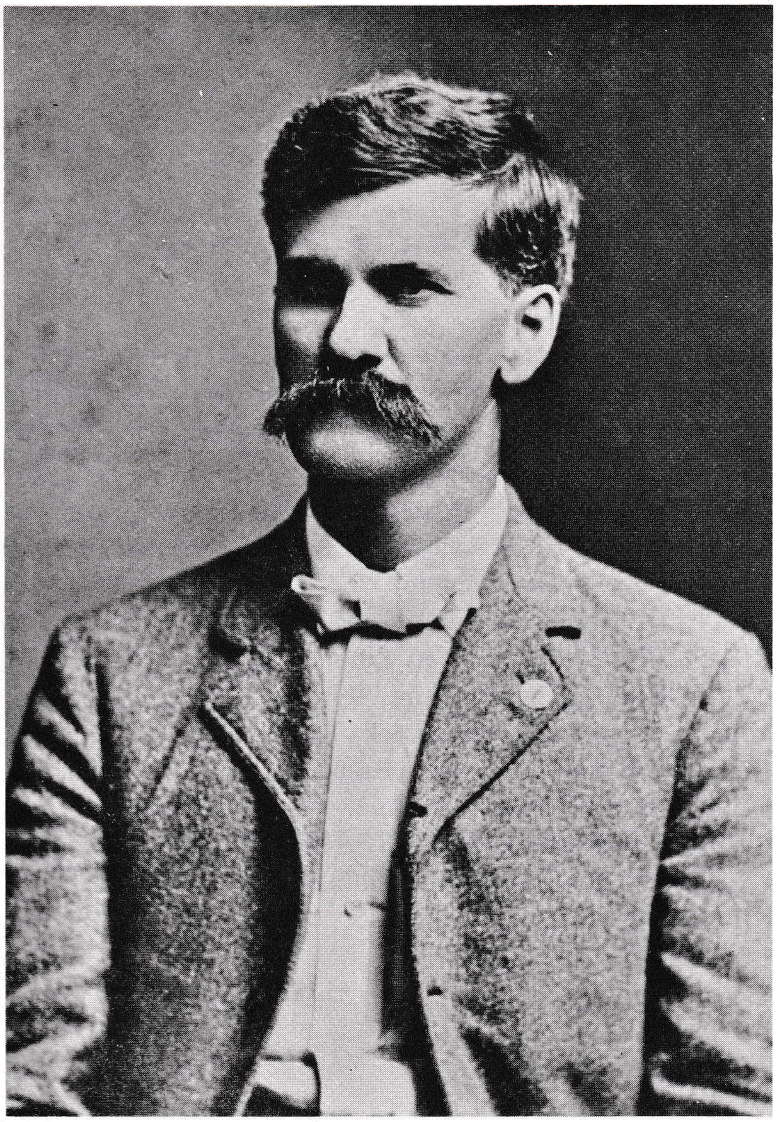

Edgar Woodward "Cap" Gates, the first manager of the Crossett Lumber Company. He was born February 19, 1866 in Big Rock, Iowa, and was married to Rose Kinnebrew in Wilmar, Arkansas on September 29, 1892. He died in Crossett October 6, 1935, and is buried in the Crossett Cemetery. This picture, from the collection of his children, was taken around 1900, when he was organizing the Lumber Company. (Forest Echoes *Files)*

CHAPTER 1

Tent City

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CHAPTER 1

Tent City

Cap Gates had many reasons for building his new mill in Hamburg, Arkansas. He was familiar with the mills in Wilmar, Fordyce and Thornton and each of these towns afforded good transportation for logs and lumber. Reliable transportation for the products of a mill was essential in the 1890s and early 1900s since there was little market for fine lumber in the villages and small towns of the area. Most houses then were made of logs or rough lumber. Many small mills in the Ashley County area cut the kind of lumber usually used for housing, and transportation was a minor matter for farmers and backwoodsmen who built their homes with their own hands.

But Cap Gates had a broader vision than any other sawmill man of the area in 1898. After all, he had been associated with men who did things in a big way and were used to broad plans. His brothers and their associates had proven themselves in the lumber business many times and had contacts all over the nation in the lumber industry. Also, he had become manager for one of their firms and proven his worth. He envisioned a swath of timber including most of Ashley County in Arkansas and Morehouse Parish in Louisiana.

Gates had worked for many months in Hamburg and was favorably acquainted with the businessmen. A railroad was already coming west as far as Hamburg and the population of the town was about to reach 3,000. Many of the citizens were

forward-looking and progressive, and Hamburg had a good school and a theater with regular productions. The courthouse was almost new and very attractive. Most of the timber Gates had bought was west of the city, but that would matter little because of the widespread use of railway trams by lumber companies of the day.

Cap Gates decided to build his mill just west of Hamburg and begin operations as soon as feasible in 1897 or 1898. However, there was one basic reason he did not carry out this program and build in the county seat. There were already mills in and around Hamburg, one owned by a Mr. Walker and another by the Footes' on Chemanihaupt Creek and still another at Berea, just a few miles northeast. Most citizens did not see the need for another lumber mill in the area. Already the town was growing so fast that builders could not keep up with the need for housing. Blacks in the area were employed by the mills and other industries of the town for usually less than a dollar a day. Many white settlers also worked at these industries after crops were all in and their wages were less than a dollar a day, but even that small amount was a welcome supplement to the meager income from the farm.

So when Gates approached some of the leading businessmen of the town in an effort to secure a location for his new industry, they simply refused to sell him enough land for his mill. They gave two reasons for not selling the mill site: the new mill would, they thought, bring in the wrong kind of people and Gates would hire all their blacks. Of course, they all thought that the Gates enterprise would cut out in ten or fifteen years and simply move to another location, leaving them with nothing but a vacant mill site and some unwelcome strangers.

The refusal of the citizens of Hamburg to sell a location shocked Gates. His deep shock turned into anger in a few days and he declared that he would build his mill somewhere else and also build him a town. Any direction he might move except west he would run into another mill. North were Berea and Fountain Hill, both with good mills. South were White and Beekman. And east there was the Chemanihaupt mill. Though these were all small mills, except Beekman, it was not considered wise to build a mill and a town right beside them. The place had to be somewhere between the Ouachita River and Hamburg.

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The Switzers had a small mill southwest of Beekman and there was a good mill at White. But between the Ouachita River and Hamburg along the Marie Saline road there was no mill, only a few homes of farmers scattered sometimes miles apart. In his efforts to purchase timber and survey his holdings, Gates had traveled the Marie Saline road many times, but he saw no really good mill location on the road. Too much of the land along the road was held by farmers who had already refused to sell their timber and land to him.

Finally, Cap Gates settled on the present location of Crossett, aided by Judge Lochala, who told him that the location of the old Commissary was the best deer stand in the county. The timber was tremendous, both hardwood and pine, but the land was higher than the surrounding area and well drained. A small creek flowed southwest about a half mile below the deer stand and to the north was Coffee Creek, which would make an excellent mill pond if dammed up. A ravine drained the east part of the ridge and the area sloped west, ultimately draining into Coffee Creek.

Gates supposedly said to a friend, as he stood with him at the deer stand beside a mammoth pine, "We can build a damned good town here and the mill can be set right over there to the north. Yep, I think this is it."

"When you gonna start?" his friend asked.

"Not a damned minute later than I have to," Gates replied.

And so, in late 1898, Cap Gates began to build the town that is now Crossett, one of the premier towns of south Arkansas. The site had to be cleared of the largest, most dangerous pine and oak along the ridge and for this a large number of laborers were hired in late fall. The timber fit for saw logs was rolled aside and kept for the coming mills while the small timber and refuse were piled high and burned around what is now the first block of Main and Pine Streets. And it was in this area, generally from 100 Main to 101 Pine to 200 Pine to 200 Main that the first settlers lived in their tents while the mill was being put together.

The machinery for the mill had to be sledded in because of the continual rains of the winter of 1898-99. Each week more settlers came in seeking jobs at the unusually high wages of $1.50 to $1.75 a day. Among the new arrivals and tent dwellers

were some of the very blacks the citizens of Hamburg had feared they would lose to Gates.

Bill Williams was born in this tent city on August 7, 1902, and still lives in the area. He was born in a tent beside what is now Highway 82, across from the new sawmill and also across from the "diggings" for the new railroad already being built into Crossett. Williams says that he was delivered by the women of the tent city without a doctor.[1] His mother did not live long thereafter and the first baby born in Crossett was cared for by kind ladies of the area, being breast fed by a lady who also nursed her own child, born elsewhere a month or so earlier. Actually, the baby was given away by his father, presumably because it was impossible for him to care for an infant and also earn a living. Though he does not remember much about the tent city, Williams does remember the kindness shown by many families of the surrounding area.

The new mill began operating May 17, 1899, but all the first lumber was used as siding for the tents and later for the first houses built for the workers.[2] Gates had high ideals and insisted that all who worked at the new mill or lived in the new town be of good moral character. No liquor was allowed and a disorderly man or drunkard was simply told to pick up his pay and be on his way. Gambling likewise was strictly frowned upon and every man was supposed to carry his share of the load. Wages were from the beginning higher than at surrounding mills and therefore attracted people from all over the surrounding areas as well as from Wilmar, Fordyce and Monticello. Every resident knew it was Cap Gates' town and soon learned to act accordingly.

Few pictures of the city of tents survive, but we do have one of the tent home of George Lessor.[3] It is clear and objects are easily identifiable. This tent was on the west side of Pine Street and in front of it are a small white dog and two little girls playing happily. The tent flap, used for a door, is thrown back and lifted above the boarded sides, giving ample ventilation.

The tent was boarded up all around with one-by-ten rough boards; sometimes the boards had batons between them to cover the cracks, but sometimes they were lapped over. The

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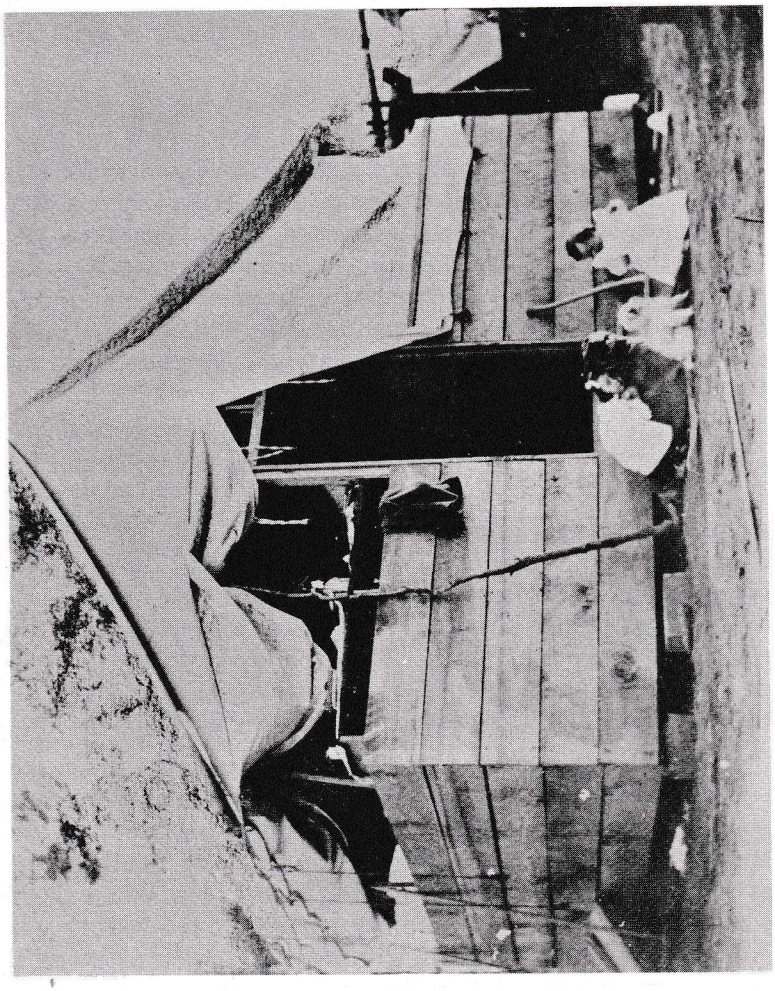
Lessor tent has the boards nailed side by side so that the batons were not essential. The foundation was wood blocks at each corner and in the middle, front and back. The floors were also of wood planking, usually the same width as the side boards. At the top of this tent was a ridge-pole over which the fabric of the tent was stretched, giving the top of the tent a conical appearance.

We can only imagine today how difficult it must have been for the wife of the family in those days. However many there were in the family, all lived, ate, slept, dressed and sometimes played in the same small one-room tent. The yard was dirt, swept clean of all grass and dangerous objects. The street just beyond the yard, really sometimes a part of the yard, was also dirt but drained by a ditch right in front of the tent. Cows, chickens and other animals wandered at will over the yards and sometimes when not closely watched, wandered into the tents themselves.

Harvey D. Howard, father of C. E. Howard of Crossett, visited the city in May, 1955, and talked to his old friend Ed Harris about the wonderful days of Tent City.[4] They had lived as neighbors and hunted in the woods for game. While here, they discussed the beginnings of Crossett. It was Howard who hired Harris for his first and only job he ever held until retirement. Howard also hired Levi Wilcoxon, who worked for the company all his working life. Wilcoxon later became a prime mover in the effort to begin and maintain a program of reforestation. The Wilcoxon Forest near Hamburg is named for him.

Supplies were hauled in by company wagon during the tent city period and shopping was easy. People simply lived off what was available. Supplementing supplies brought in to the make-shift commissary were deer, squirrel and quail as well as other game. There was no hunting season then. When a beef was killed, the whole community partook of the bounty and milk was supplied by cows who had the entire forest as a grazing ground. Many families did not have milk and it was not then thought essential after a baby was weaned. Eggs came from the dozens of ordinary Rhode Island Red and Dominicker hens that ranged over the town. Though the mill whistle blew early, the day was always heralded by the crow of the rooster behind the tent.



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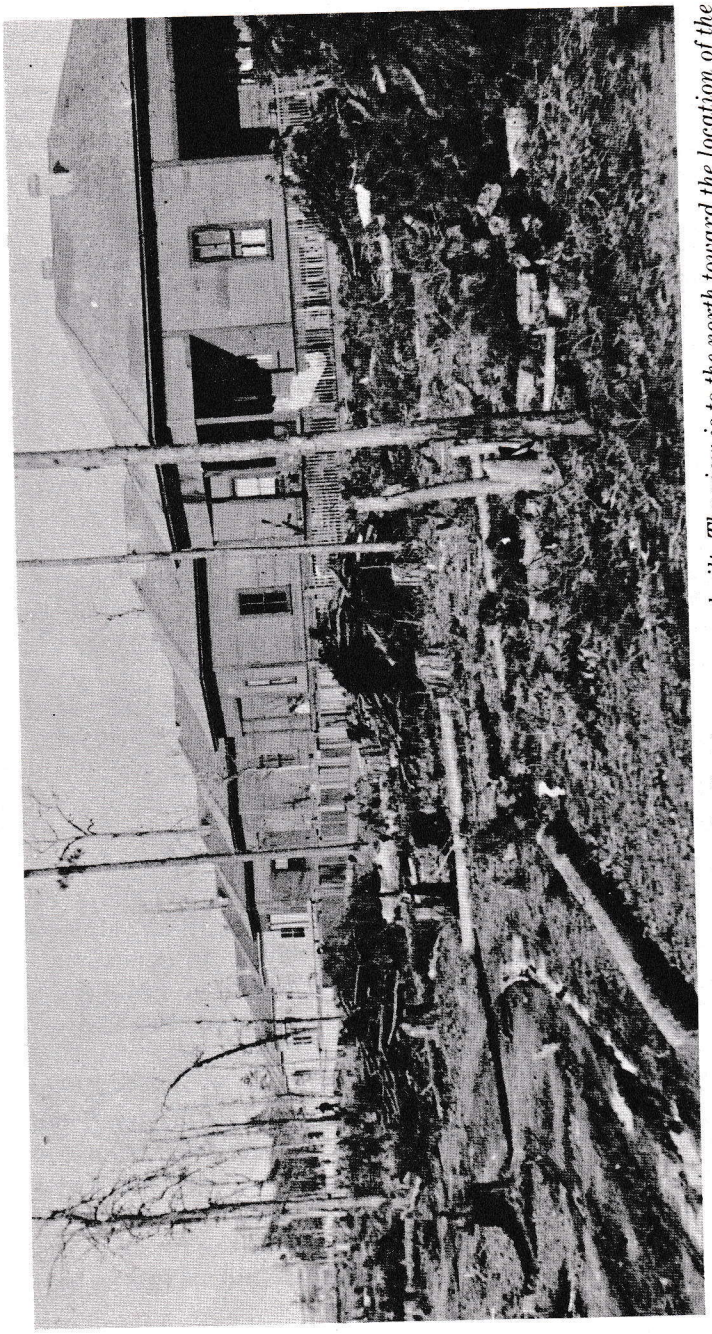
(Photo opposite page) Mr. & Mrs. George Lessor lived in this tent house until their home was built at 111 Main Street. Lessor came to Crossett in 1901 and shared a room in a tent with Jim Smith until his wife and son joined him later. This tent faced east approximately on what is now Pine Street, between the highway and Second Avenue on what was called "the Ridge." Virginia and Mary Buchner are pictured with the dogs. (News Observer, May 21, 1959, and Rhodes Negative Collection)

People of Tent City had their own religious services from time to time when some missionary or wandering minister would drop by. Services might be held in a vacant tent or out in the open on a street corner and most villagers were happy to come and get a small dose of religion now and then. Many attended churches in surrounding communities when the weather permitted, either by walking or driving in a wagon. Unity Baptist Church was a thriving church when the town of Crossett was just beginning and there was a good church southwest of the city at Petersburg. Though it was a long drive in a wagon, many citizens regularly attended a nearby church. Singings also were common among the people. Though we have no record of musical instruments some man could always "heist" a tune and lead the people in singing.

Since the people were mostly Methodist or Baptist, whose leaders frowned upon regular dancing, there were no dances as such in the community. However, play parties were held at irregular intervals all over the area and young people of Tent City could always be found at these gala affairs. Due to the strict religious leanings of most of the residents, no drinking of liquor was allowed but often out behind the barn or out in the bushes or from a saddle bag refreshments would be found by the more daring young men. However, none of this was supposed ever to come to the attention of Cap Gates. Besides the church, the play parties, which were really country dances, were the most common community entertainment.

When the tents had all been properly boarded up, attention was then given to building the first houses. They were along what is now Main and Pine Streets and made of the finest heart lumber. As soon as one house was finished, a tent family moved in and their tent was dismantled. At the same time a commissary was being built, one of the finest in the county. Company offices were also being built as fast as possible along with the living quarters.



This was Main Street in Crossett just after the first houses were built. The view is to the north toward the location of the old sawmill. The workmen had not yet painted all the homes or erected electric light poles. The picture was made by Walter Wood, a jeweler and photographer in Crossett in its early days. (Rhodes Negative Collection)

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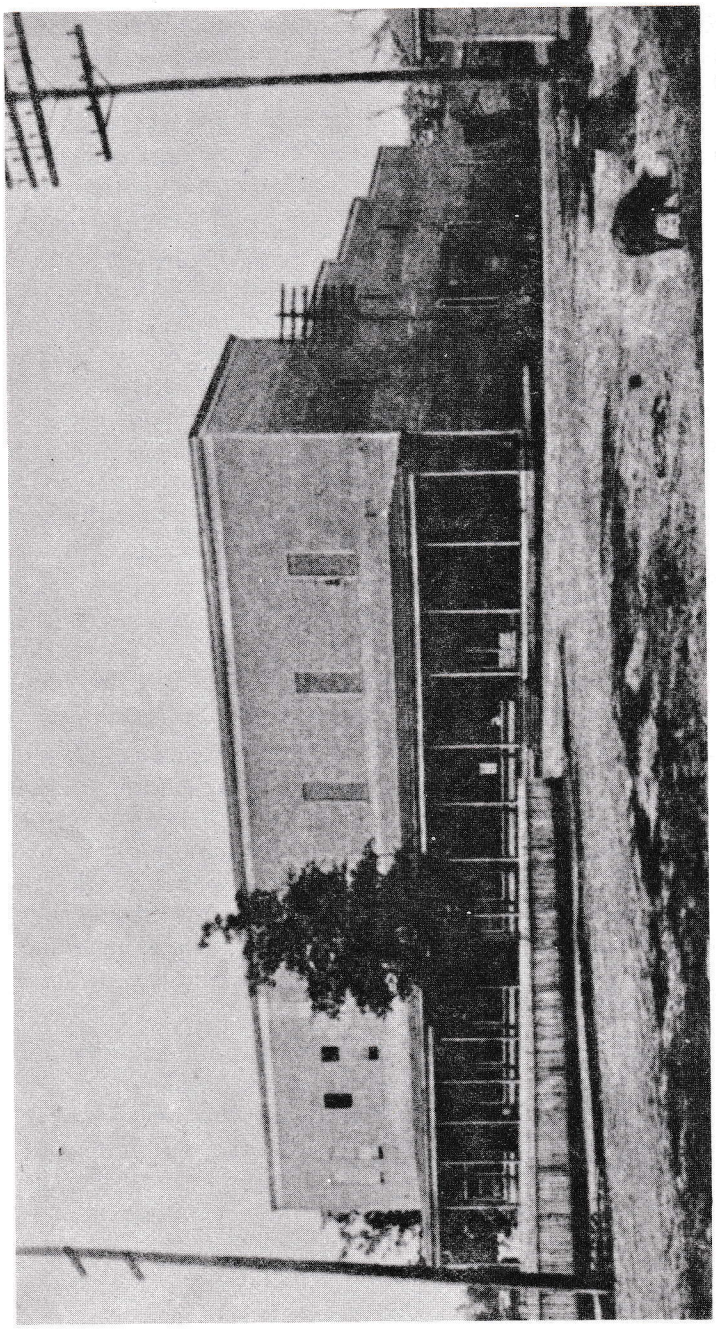
A petition for the incorporation of the town of Crossett was published in the *Eagle*, the county official newspaper, in April, 1903. The petition was granted and the town of Crossett officially began. The commissary was completed at the end of 1903, which was large enough to handle every imaginable need of the community and later became the trading center of the county.

Gradually the houses lined Pine Street, Main Street and then Oak and Tent City was gone. The black section, called the quarters, was built at approximately the same time and of the same general design. Many blacks found the higher wages paid by the new sawmill very attractive and their section of town grew rapidly. Where Tent City had been, later became the site of the company offices, a hotel, a recreation center and later the post office. In order to keep saloons out, a church of uncertain denomination was constructed of crude lumber where the Rose Inn stood so long.

But for years the streets were of mud and stumps, and sanitation was nonexistent. Everyone had an outhouse in the back which was cleaned of refuse regularly. The cattle, chickens and hogs roamed the streets at will but the community was a good place to live and the people were happy.

Gates' associates were men of vision and means as well, and almost every day Cap added acreage to the holdings of the new company with their blessings. Gates was doing what he had long wished to do, prove himself and do something important. The little mill first used was of the "Ground Hog" variety and cut only limited footage. Much larger machinery was sledded over the rough, soggy road from the Marie Saline Road to the location of the present plywood mill and set up for a mammoth operation.

In late 1903 and 1904, Crossett was expanding rapidly and more people were moving in for the regular employment and high wages then paid by the infant industry. Farmers from far around rode their horses in and worked at the mill during off season. Some of the experienced citizens who were used to the more primitive kind of sawmill operation predicted bankruptcy for the upstart sawmill. Others came from Thornton, Wilmar and Fordyce to help their friend get the operation off the ground.



This shows the commisary at the north end of Main Street in its early days. The large building is the commissary. This undated picture was made before a band stand was erected here. Note the hog rooting for food. (Rhodes Negative Collection)

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Notes on Chapter One

[1] *Ashley County Ledger*, Janice Clark, February
[2] Y. W. Etheridge, *History of Ashley County*, (V
Argus Press, 1959), p. 144.
[3] *Forest Echoes*, (August, 1960).
[4] *Ibid.*, (May, 1955).

It got off the ground and has kept on going for almost a century now, and the end of the operation is nowhere in sight. The industries of Crossett are now the largest single operation of the gigantic Georgia Pacific Corporation. The Tent City of 1899 is today the queen city of south Arkansas with every modern convenience and unlimited opportunity.

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[1] *Ashley County Ledger*, Janice Clark, February 22, 1979.
[2] Y. W. Etheridge, *History of Ashley County*, (Van Buren, Arkansas: Argus Press, 1959), p. 144.
[3] *Forest Echoes*, (August, 1960).
[4] *Ibid.*, (May, 1955).

CHAPTER 2

The First Church and School

Y. W. Etheridge, author of *History of Ashley County*, says that the mill in Crossett began operation May 17, 1899, but no lumber was shipped until 1902 when the Mississippi, Hamburg and Western Railroad Company extended tracks westward to Crossett.[1] The Crossett Company in a pamphlet, *That You May Always Remember Crossett*, stated that the first mill whistle blew the morning of December 1, 1901.[2] However, as any sawmiller knows, the first lumber cut may have been sawed before a whistle was needed or thought of. Possibly no families had yet moved in when the first lumber was sawed, for that first lumber was used to make siding for the tents in which the first citizens lived.

Cap Gates wanted to locate his mill in the county seat of Hamburg at least partly because the amenities of civilization were already present. But when he was prevented from locating in Hamburg, it was necessary that his operation be moved into an area where the first employees had no schools, churches, stores, recreation facilities or even houses into which they might move their families. However, employees of an industry like the Crossett Company would very soon see the need of the amenities of civilization.

Also, many of the first employees were not the type who would worry too much about the absence of churches and schools. *Forest Echoes* for March 1959 describes the type of

people who often flocked to new sawmill operations. The author says that the floating population for 100 miles around came to the new mill at Crossett. Many were tough gamblers, bootleggers, and hangers-on, uneducated and undisciplined men who could not remain long after demands were made upon them. The same article says that Cap Gates was policeman, prosecutor, judge and jury during those first days. Almost every day Cap had to tell some no-good character to leave town, and when he told a man to move on, he moved.[3]

However, when land was cleared for a town and tents were pitched for employees and their families began to move in, thoughts about church and school began to surface. Wandering ministers began to drop by and preach wherever they could assemble people together. So far as we know, the first sermon was preached by a Mr. Rainey in a tent about where 101 Pine Street is now.[4] This first preaching location was most likely a residence of one of the employees and perhaps performed with the full approval and connivance of Cap Gates. Crossett was thus a mission point of sorts for the Methodists and Baptists and both groups seem to have been aware of the possibilities for their respective denominations.

Legend has it that a deaconess, hired by the company manager, taught a class of unlettered men in a boxcar at night in this formative period. She also taught a class or more of children in the daytime in the same boxcar. Also according to legend this deaconess was sent by the Methodist denomination and paid by the manager of the lumber company.[5] Though the legend may or may not be true, it does indicate that the company management as well as some of its citizens were aware of the town's intellectual and spiritual void. They evidently were even then making some feeble efforts to correct the situation. They succeeded remarkably well in filling both voids in later years and in erecting fine churches and an excellent school system.

More and more people were crowding into the tent community because of the company's good wages. Tents were pitched near the mill across what is now the railroad tracks to the south. Malaria, pneumonia and accidents at the mill were not unusual but there was no hospital. The doctor from Hamburg usually visited the patients in their tents. The patients

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Many things had to be done. A boarding house was essential, a clubhouse was needed, residences had to be built as rapidly as possible. There were no streets or water system and privies were back of the houses. Cattle and hogs roamed the area at will and often slept in people's front yards. Circuit riders or wandering preachers held services in one of the tents almost every Saturday night or Sunday. The building of schools and churches could very well wait until the fledgling company was on its feet.

Cap Gates was rudely awakened to the need for a church house when a Mr. Buchner, an employee, brought him the news that a saloon would soon be opened just northwest of town.[7] It had not been easy to keep the bootleggers out of town and Gates knew that easy access to liquor on weekends and during working hours would multiply his problems in keeping the town orderly. Gates and Buchner rode out to the site of the proposed saloon to persuade the proprietor not to build so close to the town. Their efforts failed and several trusted employees were assembled at the mill for consultation.

Spencer Jarvis' father was a great country preacher of the time and helped build several churches in the area, including Jarvis Chapel, which is still a strong church. Jarvis reminded Cap Gates that it was unlawful to build a saloon within three miles of a church. Gates smiled, for the proposed saloon was only about a mile from the mill itself. Perhaps they all had the same idea at the same time. Someone suggested that they might be able to build a church before the saloon was occupied and began business. But how, they wondered, could a church be built in time when the license for the saloon was to be granted in a day or two? Gates was the kind of man who could answer a question like that.

So all afternoon the men of the mill worked on a proposed site for the church while others ran the mill and still others, including the Reverend Jarvis, hauled lumber for the proposed church house.[8] A plan was sketched by Gates and a Brother Simpson. Then the thought came to them that the building might be used also for a school until better facilities could be provided. The builders of the saloon went to sleep that night almost assured that they would open for business shortly. All

through the night Jarvis' two wagons went back and forth to the mill for loads of rough lumber, and other crews worked hard at felling the trees that stood on the site. They selected a site at 200 Main Street, which was then just a wide cleared area full of stumps and mud across from the tents and privies of the first settlers.

By first light the next morning a crew was ready to begin construction, lumber having been prepared the night before. The house was 16 by 32 feet with one door on the south end and four windows each on the east and west. A photograph in the Paul Sullins Public Library Collection shows siding made of one-by-twelve pine board lapped so that there was no air space between boards. Though the windows may not have been put in place that day, they were small, two-sashed with four panes on the bottom and four on the top and could be raised in summer time for ventilation. The lumber was of the very finest for that was the only kind being cut at the time, virgin pine right from the woods near the church and village.

The foundation was of wood blocks, three on each end and two in the middle on each side with blocks under the sills. Pine blocks like this today would decay in a very short time but those were of heart pine and would last almost indefinitely. The ends of the little church were gabled into a cone and provision for a light fixture was made for the south end. Another of the photographs of the time in the library's possession shows the roof was steep and also made of boards, placed close together with the crack between covered with a baton. A later photograph shows the north end of the roof made of riven boards or shingles, leading one to believe that the original building at some time had been added onto so that it would accommodate the school.

With a magnifying glass, one can see a bell frame on the south end of the building, perhaps added when the building was lengthened. The frame for the bell was of two-by-six timbers. According to Adam Treischmann's biographer, the first building was of logs, but that statement is false for there was no need to use logs and no photographs show a log building.[9] Old timers now remember it as a house made of pine lumber cut at the local mill.

By working through the night, clearing a site, hauling lumber, building framing, and gathering material, every-

thing was in readiness to assemble the struc
next morning. The judge was to make his c
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Rice, Mrs. C. C. Carroll, Mrs. Elmer Buchner, M
Mr. C. C. Carroll. It was pulled down in 1904. (R
lection)*

thing was in readiness to assemble the structure by breakfast next morning. The judge was to make his decision about the saloon by two o'clock in the afternoon, but Gates and twenty or so rough carpenters felt they would easily make the deadline. One crew worked on the east side and another on the west after they had laid and secured the sills and sleepers. A rough floor covered the space between the outside frames, all of heart pine lumber. Everyone felt by ten o'clock that the deadline would be met and they so informed Cap Gates, who had a man ready to make a quick journey to the county seat to inform the judge.

Clark Buchner, a company employee, was sent by horseback to the county seat thirteen miles away to inform the judge that he could not grant the license to the saloon.[10]

This building served as Crossett's first church and school house. It was built in the spring of 1902 at the direction of Cap Gates and cost about $75. The building was first located on Main Street where First South is now. Later it was moved across the street to the lot afterwards occupied by the Rose Inn. Pictured in front of the building are the officers of the first Sunday School (l.-r.): Miss Nina Pennington, Mrs. Stanley Rice, Mrs. C. C. Carroll, Mrs. Elmer Buchner, Mrs. Ida Dykes, and Mr. C. C. Carroll. It was pulled down in 1904. (Rhodes Negative Collection)

Buchner rode as fast as the horse could travel in order to make the journey in time. He made it and burst in on the judge just in time to present his petition.

The judge asked, "Since when do you have a church in Crossett?"

Mr. Buchner replied, "Since this morning."

"Is that possible? There was not one there yesterday," the astonished judge replied.

"But we worked all night and all this morning and the church is there all right," Mr. Buchner replied.

"Then there will be no saloon in Crossett," the judge said.

So the building was ready in time to keep a saloon out of Crossett and there has never been one in the city to this day.

The little building shows no chimney or flue, but an early photograph indicates that a stove pipe may have been thrust out between the first and second windows on the east side, protected by a flange, to vent the small wood heater used in the building. The steps in front had four risers and were also made of pine lumber. Inside the building were two rows of slatted benches. A platform occupied the north end of the room and was used as music stand and pulpit. Aside from the music platform, the room seems to have had no other luxury.

Crossett had lots of Methodists and Baptists but Cap Gates was Methodist; so they made it a Methodist Church. Gates sent for the nearest circuit rider to come dedicate the new building.

However, we do not know that the circuit rider sent to dedicate the church preached the first sermon in Crossett. *Forest Echoes* for June 1958 says that a Mr. Rainey preached the first sermon in the city in a tent at about what is now 101 Pine Street. It is also not at all unlikely that Brother Jarvis often preached in the city before the church was built, for he was one of the most active ministers in the area during these early years. Circuit riders or other visiting ministers sometimes preached in a tent used as a home, and religious activity in Crossett predated the building of the church house.

The primary purpose of the structure was religion, but almost as soon as the church began services, a teacher was hired and classes for all ages began in one room. A Mr. Feaster was the first teacher of record but he apparently did not stay long in the school. Physical discipline was encouraged and expected by the parents of the day and the switch or belt were

regularly used. No one seemed to think tha
pline discouraged scholarship.

Many teachers came and went but s
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Pearson taught in Crossett for many years
May 1959 shows a photograph of the first s
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large, attractive sanctuary on the corner
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The first Sunday School class in the
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Notes on Chapter Two

[1] Y. W. Etheridge, *History of Ashley County,*
Argus Press, 1959), p. 144.

[2] The Crossett Lumber Company, *That You*
Crossett, (Crossett, Arkansas: The Crossett Compani

[3] *Forest Echoes*, (March, 1959).

[4] *Ibid.*, (June, 1958).

[5] Cora Ganaway Williams, *The Morning Glory*
Methodist Publishing House, 1910), pp. 64-77.

regularly used. No one seemed to think that this kind of discipline discouraged scholarship.

Many teachers came and went but some of the earliest were Mr. Feaster, Miss Cynthia Pearson, and Allen Bird. Miss Pearson taught in Crossett for many years. *Forest Echoes* for May 1959 shows a photograph of the first school, also one of the alumni. In the second picture are Dink Lloyd, Spencer Jarvis, Charlie Finch, Philip Gates, Sr., Effie Jarvis, Minnie Finch, and Roy Dooley. The author remembers all these men well as well as Mrs. Woods.

Forest Echoes for May 1961 shows in a photograph the first Sunday School class. Mrs. Nina Pennington seems to have been the teacher. Also pictured are Mrs. Stanley Rice, C. C. Carroll, Elmer Buchner, Mrs. Ida Dykes and Mrs. C. C. Carroll.[11] This simple building did not survive Crossett's growth but almost immediately after its erection members of the Methodist congregation began to plan for a more commodious building. So in 1903 and 1904 the congregation built a large, attractive sanctuary on the corner of Main and Third Avenue.

The first Sunday School class in the new building was composed of some of the best known early settlers. The class was taught by Mrs. Ida Dykes. In the class were Bonnie Croswell, Ruth Loper, Mary Buchner, Virginia Buchner, Cora Byrd, Mrs. Bill Bullock, Dorothy Gates, Effie Jarvis, Hattie Lee Aiken, Mary Womble, Lizzie Norcott, Ora Belle Dooley, Minnie Finch, Nannie Smith, Lela Courson, Dollie Jarvis, Brymer Courson, Doyle Bowers, Gene Aiken, Harry Cannon, Mattie Jo Pennington and Travis Bowers.[12]
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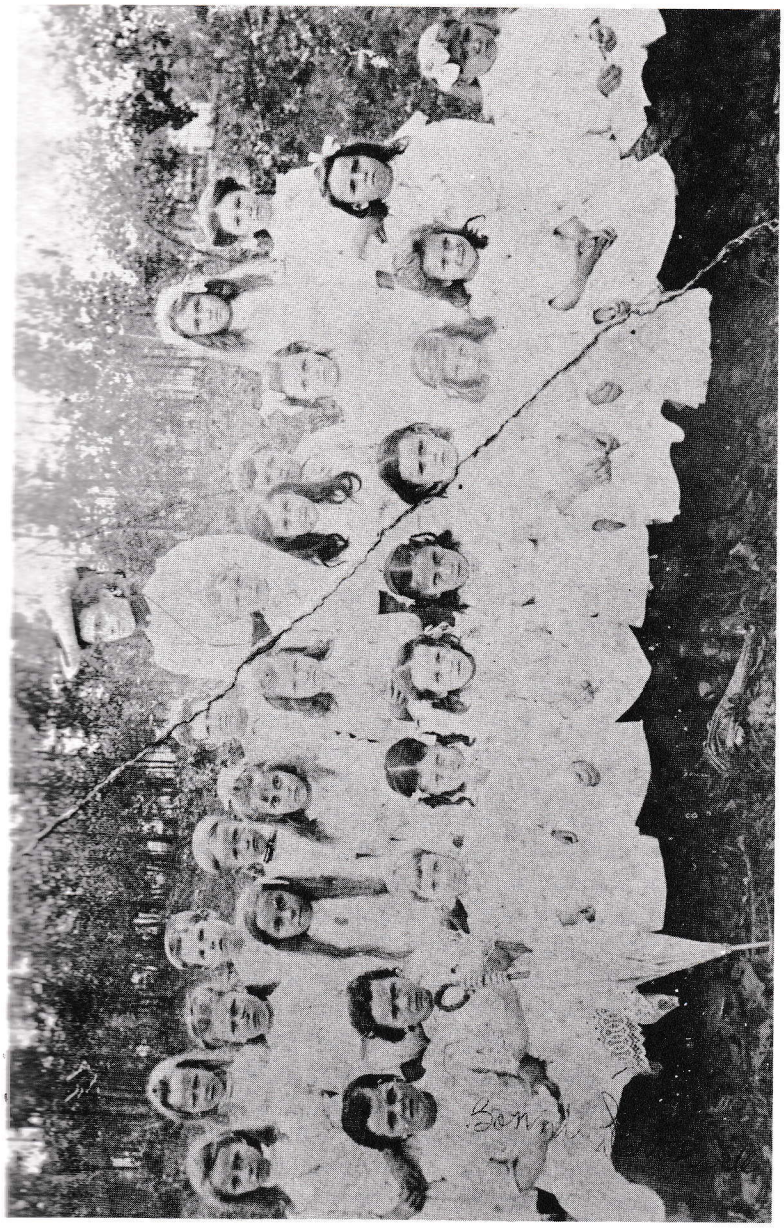
[3] *Forest Echoes*, (March, 1959).

[4] *Ibid.*, (June, 1958).

[5] Cora Ganaway Williams, *The Morning Glory*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Methodist Publishing House, 1910), pp. 64-77.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.
[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.
[8] *Forest Echoes*, (May, 1959, p. 4), (May, 1961, p. 10).
[9] Louis A. Hoselmayer, *Adam Treischmann*, (Mt. Pleasant, Iowa: Iowa Wesleyan College, 1970), p. 9.
[10] *Forest Echoes*, (July, 1959).
[11] *Ibid.*, (May, 1961).
[12] *Ibid.*, (June, 1959).

*(Photo opposite page) This was Mrs. Ida Dykes' first Sunday School class in the "new" Methodist church built in 1903 or 1904 on the northwest corner of Main and Third Avenue. Front row (l.-r.): Bonnie Linder, Ruth Loper, Mary Buchner, Virginia Buchner, unidentified, unidentified, Cora Byrd, Dorothy Gates, unidentified. Second row: Effie Jarvis, Hattie Lee Aiken, Mary Womble, Lizzie Norcott, Ora Belle Dooley, Minnie Finch, Nannie Smith, Lela Courson. Back row: Dollie Jarvis, Brymer Courson, Doyle Bowers, Gene Aiken, unidentified, Harry Cannon, Mattie Jo Pennington, Travis Bowers, (*Forest Echoes *Files)*



CHAPTER 3

The Beanery

How does one house and feed a large number of men while building a town that will ultimately become the Forestry Capital of Arkansas? Perhaps as Cap Gates planned to build his town, thirteen miles from the county seat of Hamburg in Ashley County, Arkansas, he gave little thought to this problem which would become a vital concern as the village grew into a vital sawmill town. Usually with such an operation one had time, for it was often part of a larger operation already in production with tram roads out to it and work trains with dining and sleeping quarters. But the operation Cap Gates began in the pine woods where Crossett now stands was not so blessed. At 101 Main, there had been for years a good deer stand and a bit farther down Main was a hog pen.

Gates set his first machinery down in the middle of this pine forest and pitched tents for the first mill hands and for himself as well. Food and other necessities were hauled in from Hamburg or White and the roads were almost impassable for much of the year. A small store was erected on Main Street near where the old Community Building once stood, and here the men could buy sardines, crackers, cheese and other canned goods. However, people from all over the surrounding area heard of the high wages being paid by the new company and began to flock to Crossett. Many of these men were excellent workers and skilled in the woodcrafts needed by Gates. Others

were shiftless and came only hoping to make a few extra dollars and move on.

However, some of the workers were farmers from close around and they rode their horses in for work each day and back at night. Often they brought their lunches with them and ate under one of the still uncut pines or oaks near the mill. As tent houses were built and families moved into them, men who came hunting work or salesmen who dropped by on business could find a night's lodging for a very reasonable sum. Twenty-five or sometimes fifty cents a night was considered good pay for a night's lodging and two good meals. In time a special tent was pitched for these new workers who came in or for men who had come ahead of their families hoping to send for them as soon as a tent house could be secured. These early settlers in Crossett were most hospitable and often went out of the way to accommodate new workers. Men often did their own cooking until the family arrived, sometimes many months later.

By the time the commissary was built, it became clear to the management that a hotel of some sort had to be erected. Ground around the commissary was already cleared and it seemed easiest and wisest to build the hotel there. The first hotel, a huge frame building, was erected near the commissary about where the Masonic building now stands. It was named the Crossett Hotel and had ample space, it was thought, for all visiting salesmen, company officials, and the men who came every day looking for work. Old timers are almost unanimous in the belief that the Crossett Hotel had from forty to sixty rooms. It was well staffed with an innkeeper, cooks, maids and porters.

But this hotel burned to the ground the first year and another had to be built. Gates and the management were not at this time concerned with a grand hotel such as would be built later, but were concerned with providing comfortable quarters and good food for the many prospective employees, visiting salesmen, and company executives who came in a constant stream to the new town. There was room enough for a fine hotel again in the first block of Main Street. So a new hotel, entirely of heart pine lumber, was built on this site, two stories with sixty rooms.[1] It was soon filled to capacity and a good staff made the lodgers comfortable.

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However, this large new hostelry burned to the ground within the year and the little sawmill town was left again without lodging facilities for travelers and prospective employees. The company management set to work planning another hotel, this one to be large enough and good enough for travelers or for permanent quarters. Work began in 1903 or 1904 and was completed in about a year. The new building was nearer the mill, closer to the commissary and more accessible to the livery stable, pressing shop, company offices and other facilities. It was at 101 Second Street, which is now 101 Pine, across the railroad from the sawmill and close enough to hear all the noises it generated.

This was house #202 on Second Street occupied by Frank Cannon and his family for many years. It was located directly across the street from the Crossett Hotel, commonly known as the "Beanery." This picture was made in 1907 or 1908. (Sullins Library Collection)

Tom Caldwell was the first manager of the new Crossett Hotel and he seems to have been an able hotel man, for he staffed the inn well and ran a clean, comfortable facility.[2] According to Mrs. John Cooper, now 83 years old and daughter of one of the hotel managers, there were two offices, one for the people who stayed on the hotel side and one for those who occupied the rooming section. According to Mrs. Cooper, the rooms on the south side were furnished better and cost more, these being for travelers and officials who came on company

business and usually had to stay over at least one night, for there was no road to El Dorado and no bridge over the Ouachita River. The roads in any direction from the village were mere trails and bad weather made them impassable except by horseback.

Beyond the front office was a living room used by the family of the manager and hotel guests as well. Mrs. Cooper has the Wellington piano used in the hotel parlor for many years. Upstairs was used for guest rooms.

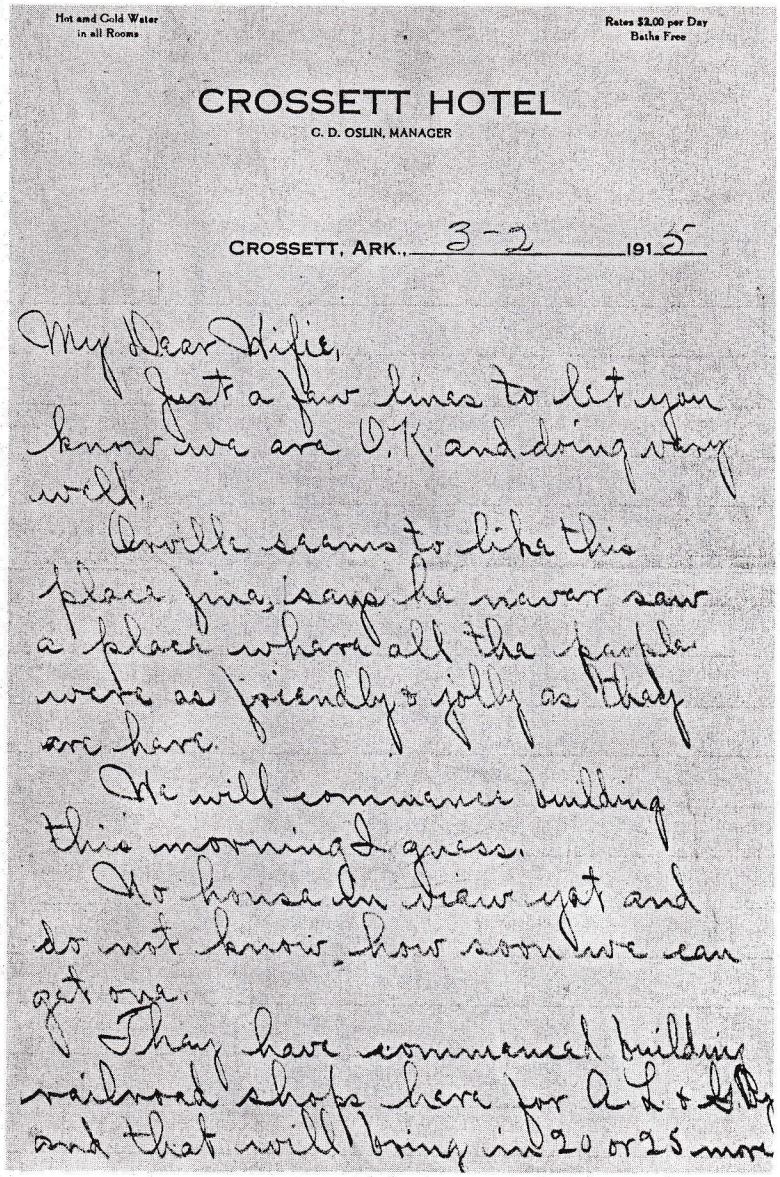
This was a two-story building, painted the famous Crossett gray, except for white trim.[3] There was a porch all along the entire front of the hotel both downstairs and upstairs. Along the porches, both upstairs and downstairs, were bannisters, painted white and the posts on the porches were of six-by-six timbers, trimmed down in the middle.

The roof was pitched sharply and gables were on front and back. Brick flues jutting out of the top indicate that the hotel was heated by wood stoves rather than the traditional fireplace. None of the surviving interviewees remember a fireplace. Each room had two windows.

The kitchen was well furnished with a huge wood stove and a walk-in icebox, which was most unusual in those days. Ice was delivered each morning. The kitchen had a full-time pastry cook. During the management of Mr. Oslin, Mrs. Cooper's father, both grandmothers lived with them and the Oslins had nine children. Therefore the hotel was much like a big family and people often gathered around the Wellington piano for impromptu singings. In the living room was an oak table with a secret drawer in which Mrs. Cooper kept her love letters. She has the table in her living room now on 401 Beech Street.

Mrs. Cooper has an early group picture of the guests at her Grandmother Oslin's birthday party. Shown in the group are Dr. Ben Bridges, pastor then of the First Baptist Church and later secretary-treasurer of the Arkansas Baptist Convention; Grandmother Oslin; Grandmother Brown; Mr. Oslin, manager; Mrs. Oslin; Mrs. Nettie Tate; Mrs. Alice T. Corgan; Brother Henderson, a local minister; Mrs. Kinnebrew, mother-in-law of Cap Gates; Mrs. Walker; Mrs. Trammel, and Mrs. Guathmey. Frank Hancock says that the hotel then reached from street to alley and from corner to 103 Second Street.[4]

This picture was made in front of the Crossett Hotel while C. D. Oslin was manager, probably about 1915. The occasion was "Grandma" Oslin's birthday party. Front row (l.-r.): Mrs. Walker. Angela Wright Oslin, Nannie Kinnebrew, Elnora Brown. Second row (l.-r.): Mr. Henderson, Methodist minister, Mrs. Alice Thompson Corgan, Nettie Tate, C. D. Oslin, Mrs. Trammell, Mrs. Guathmey, Emma Minerva Oslin, Ben L. Bridges, Baptist minister. (Courtesy of Mrs. Jewell Cooper)



Hot and Cold Water in all Rooms

Rates $2.00 per Day Baths Free

CROSSETT HOTEL

C. D. OSLIN, MANAGER

CROSSETT, ARK., 3-2 1915

My Dear Wife,

Just a few lines to let you know we are O.K. and doing very well.

Orville seems to like this place fine, says he never saw a place where all the people were as friendly & jolly as they are here.

We will commence building this morning I guess.

Do hope to hear from you and do not know how soon we can get one.

They have commenced building railroad shops here for A. L. & T. Ry and that will bring in 20 or 25 more

A copy of the first page of a letter on the stationery of the Crossett Hotel written by Jack Hinton to his wife in 1915. Mr. Hinton, first manager of the Gayola Bottling plant, was the father of Mrs. Grady Woods. Note the room rates were $2.00 per day, probably including meals. (Courtesy of Mrs. Grady Woods)

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Cooper told the writer that they had a cow
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Frank Cannon was manager. It was demo
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headquarters for the entire town-wide syste
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corder's office and a combination Council C
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The Rose Inn was by far the city's most
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Cattle, horses and hogs freely used the streets and alleys in those days and were often a nuisance in many ways. Mrs. Cooper told the writer that they had a cow named Rose that followed the family to church every Sunday evening. She says the pigs were most inconsiderate and one of them one Sunday evening jumped out of a ditch ahead of her and splattered mud all over her middy blouse.

Mrs. Jessie May Green Murray, who now lives near Bastrop, Louisiana on Highway 81, remembers much about the Beanery, a local restaurant.[5] She says that the Beanery did not get its name until about 1920. According to her it was not a fancy place to eat but provided a wholesome table for working people. The Beanery got its nickname from the practice of almost always serving a big dish of baked Navy beans. It had two stories and kept roomers. Often young people gathered there to sing and play the piano. Square dances were often held in the living room and lobby on Saturday nights.[6]

Mrs. Clara E. Berry, 83, remembers many dances at the Beanery on Saturday nights. After the Rose Inn opened, the Beanery steadily lost customers and it was necessary to remove the top story. Later the Beanery was closed while Mrs. Frank Cannon was manager. It was demolished and a new building was constructed in 1939-1940 as a WPA Project. City officers voted to name it the Crossett Community House. It was headquarters for the entire town-wide system of recreation. It also housed the Mayor's office, Police Headquarters, Recorder's office and a combination Council Chamber and Court Room.[7]

The Rose Inn was by far the city's most famous hotel and was first built in 1912. Cap Gates wanted a place where the best of guests could dine and lodge in perfect comfort. The Rose Inn seems to have been his idea altogether, even to the architecture. It was three stories, built of the finest pine lumber, and painted green. A wide porch ran across the entire front ground floor with large white columns built of two-by-fours. The second floor was primarily for prominent visitors and equipped with ceiling fans and sometimes a buzz fan. The third floor was for teachers and mill workers who were waiting for a house or for marriage.[8] Gates wished everything to be the best, so he hired a chef from Little Rock to train his

staff. The waiters were scrupulously correct and always wore white coats.

This building burned in the first year and Gates set about rebuilding immediately. The new building was located on 200 Main Street and continued to render good service until torn down in the early Seventies. It became famous for its fine food and genteel atmosphere. The author has a complete chapter in *Wilderness Lady* another Crossett history, on the famed hostelry. It was the last of the memorable landmarks of former years and probably the most popular and famous.

The Cremer Hotel was built for the convenience of people who were building the Cremer Sawmill south of Kentucky Street. It remained in operation until 1978 when it burned to the ground. According to Hazen Bryant, retired Georgia Pacific engineer and long-time resident, the Cremer Hotel was not built for lasting significance. When the author first knew the Cremer Hotel in 1948, it was an apartment building with five two-bedroom apartments. Each apartment had its own kitchen and a wide back porch extended the length of the building. It was built of one-by-twelve pine boards and painted brown. It finally became a haven for aged couples and many spent their last days in the old Cremer Hotel.[9] In its place on Florida Street now is a sporting goods store.

Velma Hays lived on Main Street in a boarding house her father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Boyd, ran for many years, located where the city hall now stands. Her mother and father ran the boarding house as a sideline while her father worked at the mill. Not many stayed in the home but it had enough rooms to accommodate an overnight traveler. Almost always some stranger was staying at the Boyd home. Later the Boyd boarding house moved to Pine Street and finally closed when the Boyds were too old to work. Here is an advertisement for Ma Boyd's:

GRAND OPENING
MA BOYD'S
MAMMOTH DELUXE BOARDING HOME
A HOME AWAY FROM HOME
EXCELLENT HOME COOKING
WONDERFUL VARIETY EVERY MEAL
YOU CAN'T GO WRONG AT BOYD'S
****

MY TRIBUTE TO M

Before the sun comes out of the East
Ma's up and at 'em, preparing a feas
She rattles the dishes, bangs the pan
Clatters the stove and rouses all han

At breakfast there's grapefruit and o
With cornflakes and bran while oatm
The bacon is crisp, the eggs are sunn
And Ma aids digestion with remarks

After the breakfast dishes are done
Ma bakes and roasts, broils and stew
Gets in biscuits and bread, rolls and
With never a let up till dinner is thr

And now when supper is well on its
Ma takes a few moments to plan for
She orders her groceries and shops a
To find something new for her hungr

Three times a day that long table gr
With viands all tempting including c
And if folks that around it every day
Don't keep a sharp eye, they'll get fa

But now the house is quiet; night is c
Ma's gone to her bed with many a w
One by one, the lights are going out;
Today is done; tomorrow will soon be

We call her Ma, and she was just tha
She'll sew on a button or hang up yo
She'll listen to your troubles; gossip a
Or you gather by the fire and there j

Now I never studied literature, or po
And I know quite well this hasn't goo
But it's my tribute to Ma, and I know
She'll know that I mean it, cause I th

Hugh Bows

In West Crossett, John Harville buil
individual cabins with no dining facilitie
dozen identical cabins and the Harville ho
The writer stayed there for a few months
being moved from Main Street and rebuilt
nice place to stay but strictly for weary trav

MY TRIBUTE TO MA

Before the sun comes out of the East
Ma's up and at 'em, preparing a feast.
She rattles the dishes, bangs the pans
Clatters the stove and rouses all hands.

At breakfast there's grapefruit and oranges, bananas too,
With cornflakes and bran while oatmeal stews
The bacon is crisp, the eggs are sunny
And Ma aids digestion with remarks quite funny.

After the breakfast dishes are done
Ma bakes and roasts, broils and stews,
Gets in biscuits and bread, rolls and buns,
With never a let up till dinner is through.

And now when supper is well on its way
Ma takes a few moments to plan for next day
She orders her groceries and shops all around
To find something new for her hungry hounds.

Three times a day that long table groans
With viands all tempting including corn pone.
And if folks that around it every day gather
Don't keep a sharp eye, they'll get fatter and fatter.

But now the house is quiet; night is drawing nigh
Ma's gone to her bed with many a weary sigh
One by one, the lights are going out; now none burn,
Today is done; tomorrow will soon be born.

We call her Ma, and she was just that,
She'll sew on a button or hang up your hat
She'll listen to your troubles; gossip a bit,
Or you gather by the fire and there just sit.

Now I never studied literature, or poetry either
And I know quite well this hasn't good meter,
But it's my tribute to Ma, and I know quite well
She'll know that I mean it, cause I think she's swell.

Hugh Bowser

In West Crossett, John Harville built a tourist court of individual cabins with no dining facilities. It had perhaps a dozen identical cabins and the Harville home stood next to it. The writer stayed there for a few months while his home was being moved from Main Street and rebuilt at 601 Oak. It was a nice place to stay but strictly for weary travelers who wanted a

peaceful night's rest. After Mr. Harville's death,it was sold by his widow and the cabins were torn down.

Later Ovid Switzer built a motel on "Stink Creek" running between West Crossett and Crossett. These, too, are nice buildings but also strictly for weary travelers.

North Crossett has two motels, one built by Tommy Johnson next to the new shopping center. It is also a motel with no dining facilities that seems always to be well patronized. Farther out on the left as one drives toward Hamburg is still another motel, modern and well kept. It is owned and run by Mr. Patel. After the Rose Inn was demolished, these were the only places to stay in the city except for an annex to the old Rose Inn which was allowed to stand until better facilities could be provided. Instead of the famed Rose Inn dining, there was then only a small cafe across the street from the annex next to which the Georgia Pacific Corporation had rented a store and converted into a dining room. This served the visiting public until the Ramada Inn was built on the truck route near the Norman Junior High School and the Crossett Senior High School.

The Ramada Inn came to Crossett in the fall of 1978 and was enthusiastically welcomed, for the city had no adequate facilities for travelers since the razing of the Rose Inn. It galled many residents that Crossett was not able to properly welcome and entertain the many visitors who came to town.

The Ramada Inn serves well as a replacement for the Rose Inn and the Beanery, for it provides for everything one might need in travel. It has sixty rooms, as well furnished as Ramada Inn can provide. Adequate banquet facilities are provided with two large rooms for club meetings and special events. The dining facilities are adequate with Helen Ross presently serving as buffet cook. Planned for the addition now in progress are a large lounge, a supper club, two large meeting rooms and banquet facilities for at least 200.

The manager is Letty Fisher and Ronda Works is the desk clerk. The new addition will include twenty-four new rooms with new and better landscaping and improved service. Ramada Inn has proven to be an attractive place for all kinds of meetings in the community and prices have remained reasonable. It is located on Highway 133T next to Lucas Lake in one of the most beautiful wooded areas in the county. Though Cap

Gates might have cringed at the demoliti
Inn, perhaps he would be delighted to s
motel called Ramada Inn.

Notes on Chapter Th

[1] *The News Observer*, Crossett, Arkansas, Ma
[2] Interview with Mrs. John Cooper.
[3] Interview with Hazen Bryant.
[4] Interview with Frank Hancock, early settle
[5] Interview with Jessie May Green Murray.
[6] Interview with Gertrude Harville Tooley.
[7] *Forest Echoes*, (May, 1940).
[8] John W. Buckner, *Wilderness Lady*, (Little R
lishing Company, 1979), p. 122.
[9] Interview with Hazen Bryant.

Gates might have cringed at the demolition of his beloved Rose Inn, perhaps he would be delighted to see the beautiful new motel called Ramada Inn.

Notes on Chapter Three

[1] *The News Observer*, Crossett, Arkansas, March 31, 1980.
[2] Interview with Mrs. John Cooper.
[3] Interview with Hazen Bryant.
[4] Interview with Frank Hancock, early settler, now 83 years old.
[5] Interview with Jessie May Green Murray.
[6] Interview with Gertrude Harville Tooley.
[7] *Forest Echoes*, (May, 1940).
[8] John W. Buckner, *Wilderness Lady*, (Little Rock, Arkansas: Rose Publishing Company, 1979), p. 122.
[9] Interview with Hazen Bryant.

CHAPTER 4

Schools

The story of the development of the Crossett School System is a remarkable tale. It is a story of foresight, solid development, and constant care for excellence in both literary and material advancement. The men who first began the system knew what they were about, though they may not have known all the latest methods and the path their efforts would later take. Perhaps they only knew that their children and their neighbor's children needed to learn and that they were the ones to pay for the learning and plan for their future.

In 1902, when the first school was begun in the small sawmill town, there was little to learn from in the area or in the entire state of Arkansas. Each community was responsible for the education of their young without supervision from state officials, county supervisors and federal bureaucrats. Sawmill towns all over the state and in neighboring states were in the same position, and no one expected the town to remain long or for the school itself to be needed in twenty years. Logging camps planned and paid for their own schools, sometimes using one teacher for all grades and sometimes employing three or four as the number of students required. It was not at all uncommon for one teacher to care for all grades through elementary school. Yet, many of these primitive schools did a remarkable job and some of these early efforts developed into solid educational systems, many of which remain to this day.[1]

When the first church house was built in order to keep out a saloon, someone immediately saw the possibility of having a place to educate the young of the community. Though the small building was planned for a church, it was not uncommon then for a church to lend its property for school purposes. Accordingly, a Mr. Feaster was employed to teach in the one-room building all the pupils of the community who wished an education. At this time, there seems to have been no formal school board and no record was kept of the number of students, Feaster's salary, or subjects taught, but we can be pretty sure that the emphasis was on the essentials of reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic. Feaster did not remain long in the school but the building soon was too small for the growing number of pupils and more teachers were needed.[2]

Accordingly, in 1904, the school was moved to two houses at 108 and 110 Oak Street. More teachers were then hired to care for the larger number of students. Two of the early teachers were Mrs. Cynthia Woods and Miss Alice Pearson, who taught in the Crossett school system for many years.[3]

D. C. Hastings has the distinction of the longest tenure of any superintendent in the history of the Crossett Public Schools. He came to Crossett from Hamburg in 1905 and began his teaching career here fresh out of Vanderbilt University. He first taught in the two dwellings the school occupied at Third and Oak Streets. It soon became evident to the young superintendent that more room was needed if the school was to prosper and accommodate the pupils constantly coming to the new town. Accordingly, the Crossett Lumber Company made funds available for the construction of the first of the green schools on the large lot of oak-shaded space between Oak and Beech Streets at Gates Avenue. The school board agreed to pay the company in equal installments over a period of years. Hastings was asked by the board to oversee the construction of the new building and he evidently did an excellent job for the building served the community for over half a century.[4]

From the School Board minutes, now kept in the offices of the superintendent, we get an idea of the steady progress of the school during these early years. Minutes for April 19, 1907, give Hastings' seventh monthly report: Number attending one or more days this month, 157; total enrollment, 206; average daily attendance, (86%), 135; number of tardies, 19; cases of

corporal punishment, 8; visitors, 18. App
were absent at times and physical punis
Physical discipline continued to be com
schools as long as Hastings was superin
ingly was accepted by the parents.[5]

Crossett has always been known fo
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Gates was an ardent supporter of all fo
especially liked baseball and at one time
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*In 1907 the first of several buildings was built th
called the Green School. Workmen labored throu
light to complete the first building for the beginn
(Courtesy of W. E. Hastings)*

corporal punishment, 8; visitors, 18. Apparently many pupils were absent at times and physical punishment was common. Physical discipline continued to be common in the Crossett schools as long as Hastings was superintendent and it seemingly was accepted by the parents.[5]

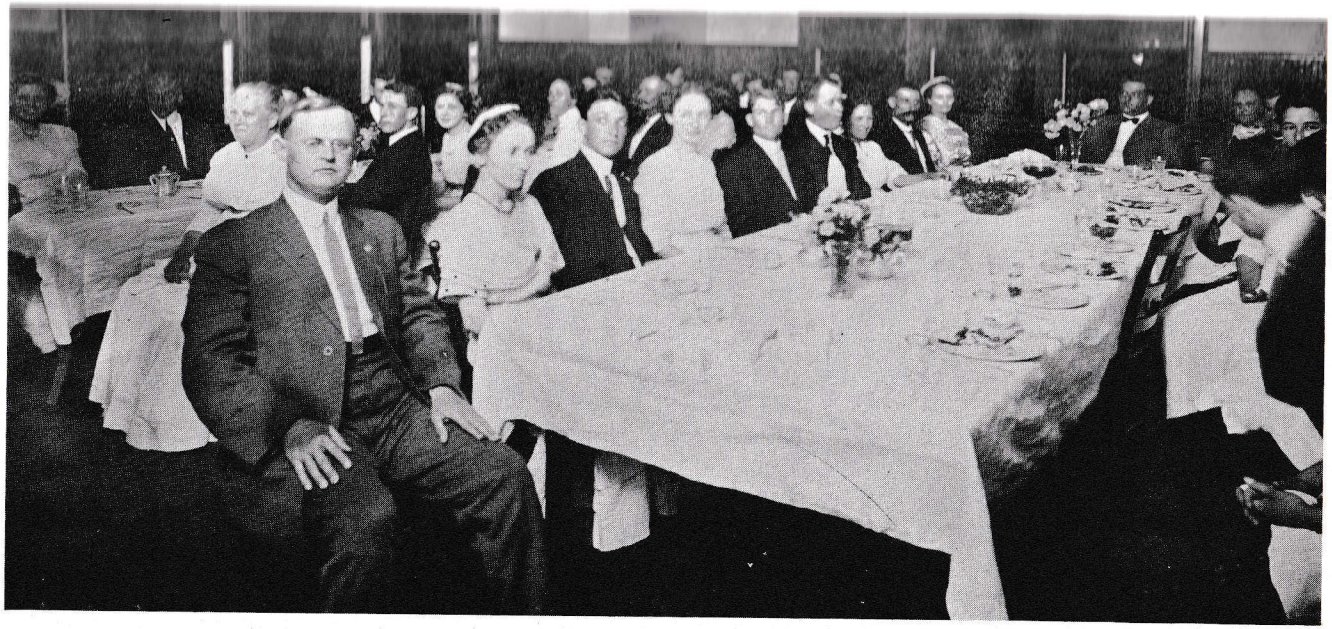
Crossett has always been known for a proper emphasis upon athletics, particularly team sports. The boys of the school began practicing football on the spacious grounds near the first green school house and soon a team was ready for competition with surrounding towns. On the first team were men whose names are familiar to many present-day citizens of Crossett. Roy Dooley and Charlie Finch remembered their first game with Monticello. They made the trip in a wagon and spent the first night in Fountain Hill, feasting on sardines and crackers. After completion of the trip the second day, the game was played and they returned home the third day. At this time football was practiced on the grounds of the school but basketball was practiced in the recreation hall on Main Street. Cap Gates was an ardent supporter of all forms of athletics but especially liked baseball and at one time took the entire baseball team with him to Colorado for exhibitions.

In 1907 the first of several buildings was built that comprised what was called the Green School. Workmen labored through the nights by lantern light to complete the first building for the beginning of the 1907 fall term. (Courtesy of W. E. Hastings)

The first extant recorded minutes of the school board lists the following board members: M. P. Dooley, President; C. A. Buchner, Secretary; E. W. (Cap) Gates; T. A. Rice; L. L. Honeycutt; and R. M. Courson. Apparently all members were present for this meeting. At this important meeting a resolution was passed to mortgage all school property to the Crossett Lumber Company for $15,000 to be used in construction of their first building. The loan was to bear six percent interest and be paid back in equal yearly installments every December 1. The schools were supported by a four-mill tax and tuition from the families of students attending. Tuition in these early years was, for high school students, $4.00; non-residents, $5.00; and grade school students, $3.50.[6]

Minutes for April 1909 set the superintendent's salary at $150 monthly. Mr. Hall, the principal, was paid $100 per month, and Miss Carrie Calhoun received a salary of $60 per month. Miss Carrie was a recent addition to the staff. Teachers elected that year were Miss Stella Adkins, Miss Carrie Calhoun, Miss Willie Walters, and Miss Lena Carnahan. In the May meetings of the same year, the board accepted the resignations of J. H. Hall and Miss Lena Carnahan. Also a man came into the system that year who was to wield a terrific influence on education in Crossett for many years following. T. W. Daniel was elected principal of the black high school at a salary of $75. There was a disparity between the blacks and the whites in salaries with the principal of the white school paid $100 per month and the principal of the black school only $75. This was the custom throughout Arkansas and the South at the time.[7]

Progress continued in the Crossett system as new people constantly moved into the area to receive the higher salaries paid by the Crossett Lumber Company. The town was growing and the company was well established by 1910. As early as January 14, 1910, the need for music education was recognized and a Miss Guier was recommended for employment by the board. Hastings' salary continued to climb as his duties mounted and on March 28, 1911, his salary was set at $165. At the same meeting the salary of T. W. Daniel, the black principal, was raised to $90 per month. Daniel was given two assistants, not named, at $25 and $30 per month.[8]



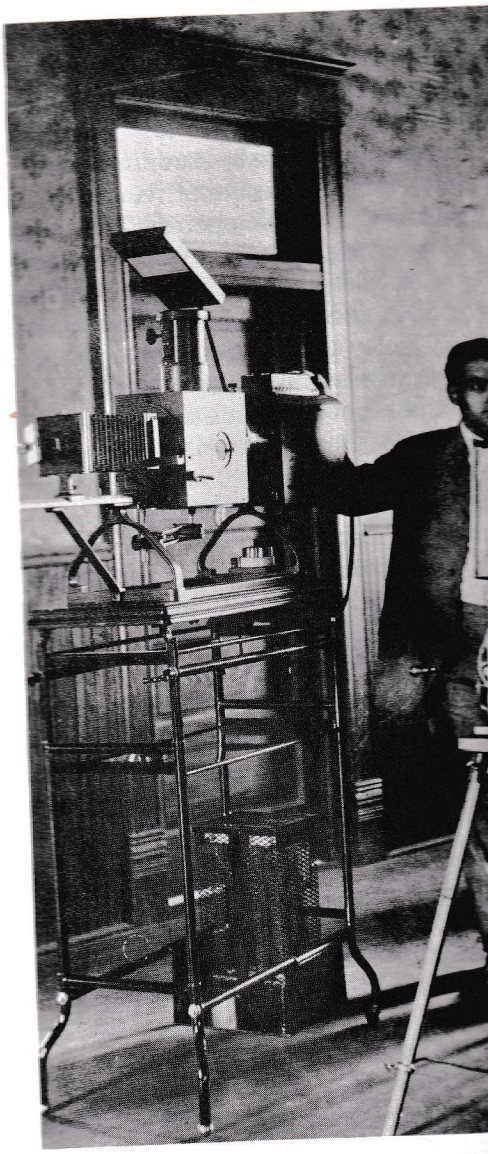
This is probably a banquet for school teachers held around 1910 at the Green School. At the table on the left, seated on the near side are (l.-r.) Mrs. L. Calhoun, Roscoe Sanders and Icie Lee Murphy. The first man in the foreground at the other table is unidentified. Gladys Lawson Dew is on his left, followed by two unidentified people, Roy Dooley, an unknown man, Mrs. M. P. Dooley, M. P. Dooley (School Board president), Mrs. E. W. (Rose) Gates, Supertintendent D. C. Hastings (at head of table) and Mrs. Frank Cannon. (Courtesy W. E. Hastings)

Each school district was then expected to raise and disburse all funds without state aid. However, on July 26, 1911 the board met specifically to consider state aid. Surprisingly enough, after careful consideration, the board respectfully refused state aid because, "It would be too restrictive and would bar us from proper advancement." What the restrictions were we do not know. There is no indication that the board ever suffered in any manner as a result of this refusal.[9]

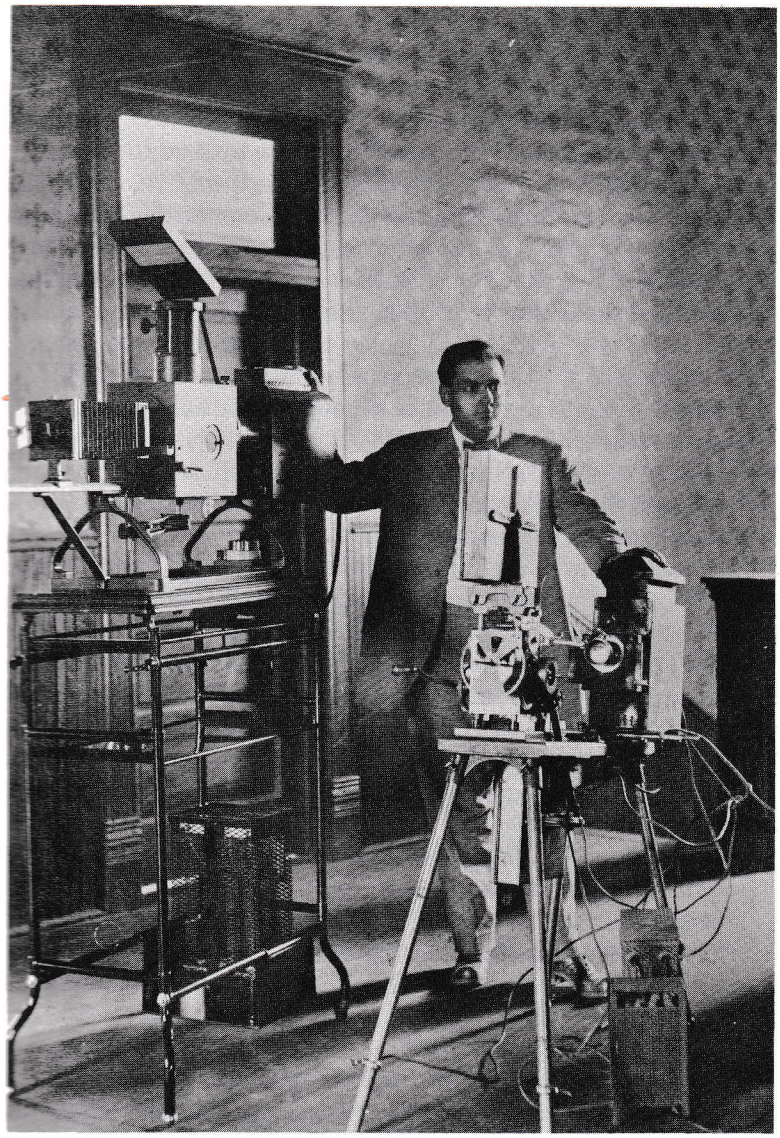
Hastings announced at the meeting of August 9, 1911,that the school was now Class A. He also announced something that few, if any, people of Crossett believed could happen. He told the board that graduates from Crossett High School entered the University of Arkansas as second-year students. On account of the excellence of the program at Crossett and the ability of its graduates, students from Crossett High School were allowed simply to skip the first year at the University. When people boast of the good school we used to have, they are not whistling in the dark. At this same board meeting, a committee of 100 was appointed to consider improvements. A mass meeting of citizens was to be called for some time later. By this time even the comparatively new green school was becoming too crowded and there was no gymnasium. However, few high schools in Arkansas had gymnasiums at that time. Members of the school board then were M. P. Dooley, F. S. Courson, T. A. Rice, R. M. Courson, E. W. (Cap) Gates, and L. L. Honeycutt.

Dresses for graduation were always a problem for families of the area since some girls would spend too much on a dress for this one occasion and many girls could not afford an expensive dress. The board in its meeting of September 17, 1914, ruled that girls who had at least two years of home economics would make their own dresses but those with less could buy their dresses. However, a strict limit was placed on the amount a girl could spend on the graduation dress. No girl could pay more than five dollars for the dress material. Tuition was always a problem and the rates were again set at $4.00 for high school; non-resident, $5.00, grammar school, $3.50 and Domestic Science, $3.50.[10]

The committee of 100 appointed previously recommended that a gymnasium be built by popular subscription and improvements be made to the green school.



Superintendent D. C. Hastings proudly
graphic equipment in the Crossett school
itation by the North Central Association.
Indiana plan of work-study-play and ac
Hastings was superintendent from 1905
(Courtesy of W. E. Hastings)



Superintendent D. C. Hastings proudly showing the latest in photographic equipment in the Crossett schools. He led the school to accreditation by the North Central Association. The schools adopted the Gary, Indiana plan of work-study-play and achieved statewide prominence. Hastings was superintendent from 1905 until his retirement in 1944. (Courtesy of W. E. Hastings)

Hastings and other members of the school system recognized the necessity of upgrading the curriculum at all levels. A school that had attracted nationwide attention was the Gary, Indiana system. The green school was crowded and Hastings thought Crossett could improve its system by studying an outstanding school and perhaps adopting some of its methods. Accordingly, on March 20, 1920, the board appointed Hastings and Dooley to go to Indiana and study the Gary system.[11] Incidentally, Hastings had continued his own education through the years at several universities and taught summer school at the University of Arkansas. Dooley and Hastings were pleased with the Gary system and enthusiastically recommended it to the board, which adopted the report without dissent. It was what was called the study, work, play system and allowed all space to be used at all times. It gave each student full opportunity to study, work, and play. This sytem continued for many years in the Crossett schools.

One of the earliest high school football teams was the 1907 squad, consisting of Gus McEntire, Roy Dooley, Brymer Courson, Ben Hall, Amon Smith, Henry Easterling, Archie Sinex, Fred Fletcher, Frank Moffatt, Louis Holiman, Arnet Marcott, John T. Erwin and Percy Gallagher. One can see that substitutes were hard to come by and a player was expected to play the entire game without relief. This was a good team, first losing to the Clary Training School and then beating them by a big margin.[12]

D. C. Hastings possessed two qualities that helped make him one of the premier school men of Arkansas. Hastings knew education and was constantly looking for new ways to improve the Crossett system. He also knew how to get along with people, both students and their parents, so that he was able to maintain strict discipline without much reaction from parents. The adoption of the Gary System is an example of his farsightedness and acumen, for it improved instruction and also made the available space useable during the entire school day. He was farsighted enough to anticipate the need to consolidate the surrounding schools with the Crossett system so the rural children could benefit from the superior program and the millage from these areas could be used to improve the physical plant.

Not everything went well with Hastings and the school board, however. The depression hit the area hard and many

people were laid off at the mill and t
moreover, many could not pay the sma
school board meeting of October 22, 1
mously adopted a resolution to eliminat
and to continue to teach grades one thr
mon school." Due to some provision
minutes of the school board, this resol
effect and the high school continued as
February 24, 1932, the board had to no
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expense of running a bus.

When Hastings came, he found the
small residences. New space and large
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Hastings looked for. Therefore he recor
that the plant be moved to the block be
Streets, south, at Third Avenue, an ent
beautiful oak shade trees. The company
and ultimately the first Green School
building with a sort of half-story above i
used to practice plays. With the constant
the town and the consolidation of new di
another school building was soon need
building erected, also two stories, but w
play area.

Year after year, even through the de
new facilities resulted in still more bu
ments. An auditorium was added south o
house with stage and school offices. La
nomics cottage and a shop where the bo
skills were built. Afterwards a band ha
emphasis given to music. This band h
as a theater for community productio
built by community subscription, was
the best in the state, later serving as a Na
when the new gymnasium was erected
High School. Restroom facilities were p
building out from the second green sch
the boys and one for the girls, with mo
water was provided from fountains in t
was a football practice field just south o

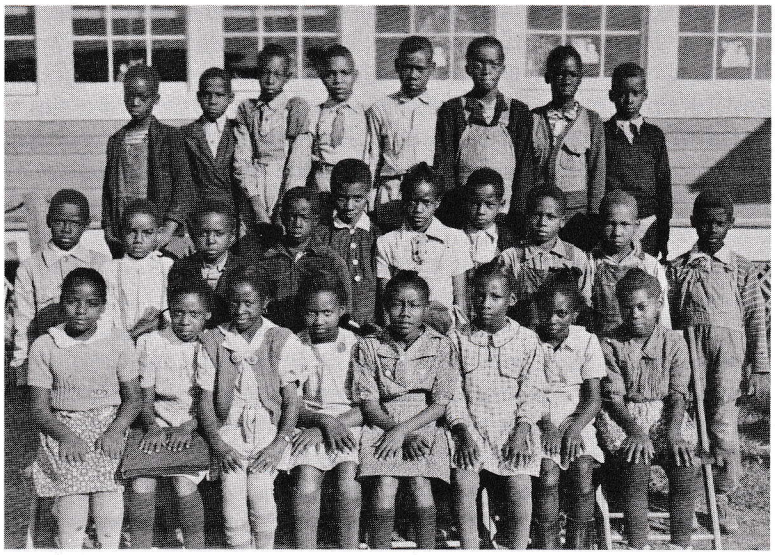
people were laid off at the mill and tax receipts were low; moreover, many could not pay the small tuition fees. In the school board meeting of October 22, 1931, the board unanimously adopted a resolution to eliminate grades 10, 11 and 12 and to continue to teach grades one through nine in the "common school." Due to some provision not mentioned in the minutes of the school board, this resolution never went into effect and the high school continued as before.[13] However, on February 24, 1932, the board had to notify the Harris school district that they could not take them into the system due to the expense of running a bus.

When Hastings came, he found the school housed in two small residences. New space and larger grounds were absolutely essential if the school was to approach the excellence Hastings looked for. Therefore he recommended to the board that the plant be moved to the block between Oak and Beech Streets, south, at Third Avenue, an entire block of land with beautiful oak shade trees. The company and the board agreed and ultimately the first Green School was built, a two-story building with a sort of half-story above in which children later used to practice plays. With the constant addition of families to the town and the consolidation of new districts into the system another school building was soon needed and another green building erected, also two stories, but without the third-story play area.

Year after year, even through the depression, the need for new facilities resulted in still more buildings and improvements. An auditorium was added south of the first green school house with stage and school offices. Later still a Home Economics cottage and a shop where the boys could learn manual skills were built. Afterwards a band hall was added and new emphasis given to music. This band hall is still in use now as a theater for community productions. The gymnasium, built by community subscription, was long considered one of the best in the state, later serving as a National Guard Armory when the new gymnasium was erected at the Norman Junior High School. Restroom facilities were provided by a separate building out from the second green school house, one side for the boys and one for the girls, with modern toilets. Drinking water was provided from fountains in the school yard. There was a football practice field just south of the shop area which

was used until the Hastings Elementary School was built.[14] Hastings also built the white elementary school at 704 Oak Street.

In the school board meeting for April 22, 1942, the members discussed an increase in Fowler's salary and his possible succession to Hastings if he could be cured of certain unmentioned faults.[15] The board continued to look for a replacement for Hastings but the board had not provided him a retirement plan. In almost all undertakings of the schools, the Crossett Lumber Company played a prominent part and contributed liberally to all causes. They came to the rescue by providing Hastings with a lifelong pension. Accordingly, in 1944, this tower of strength in education in Crossett and throughout Arkansas retired.



A typical class in the Ashley County Training School in 1943 is that of Mrs. Willie Mae Evans, teacher of Fourth Grade A. Seated, First row (l.-r.): Mildred Coleman, Olevia Smith, Ernestine Mitchell, Forestine Candys, Catherine Watson, Rosa Ward, Elzadie Pippins, Almeta Goree. Second row: Billy Simms, Otis Anderson, Jr., Ezelle Childs, Dorsey Bunton, Ollie Mae Goree, Claretha Swift, David T. Carter, William Carney, Theophis Lewis, George Rance. Third row: L. W. Haynes, Jesse Bridges, Ulysses Williams, Roosevelt Spencer, James Lowe, Clepheus Womack, Charles Simmons, Robert Earl Evans. (Forest Echoes *Files)*

CLOSING EXER

—OF THE—

CROSSETT JUNIOR HI

—AND THE—

CROSSETT ELEMENTA

SCHOOL AUDITO

MAY 26, 1927—8:0

Processional .....

Invocation.....

Chorus.....

Reading.....

Piano Solo.....

Reading Year's Honor Rolls and Highest A

a. For Elementary School, Principal Car

b. For Junior High School, Principal All

Piano Duet.....

Awarding Mrs. C. W. Gates' Room Prize..

Presentation of Bible Study Certificates...

Welcome of Elementary Graduates to Junio
Bird.

Response.....

Chorus.....

Awarding Elementary School Certificates.

Awarding Junior High School Diplomas...

Announcements.

The program for the end of the 1926-1927 s
tary and Junior High Schools. F. A. Holt, th
vocation, was the Baptist pastor from 1926
evidently pastor of the Methodist church. (
Collection)

CLOSING EXERCISES

—OF THE—

CROSSETT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

—AND THE—

CROSSETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

MAY 26, 1927—8:00 P. M.

Processional ..... Ninth Grade

Invocation..... Rev. F. A. Holt

Chorus..... Ninth Grade

Reading..... Ruby Phillips

Piano Solo..... Adalaide Norman

Reading Year's Honor Rolls and Highest Averages:

a. For Elementary School, Principal Carrie Calhoun

b. For Junior High School, Principal Allen Lynch

Piano Duet..... { Irene Barnes / Vivian Odle

Awarding Mrs. C. W. Gates' Room Prize..... Rev. O. L. Walker

Presentation of Bible Study Certificates..... Miss Dowell

Welcome of Elementary Graduates to Junior High School... Carroll Bird.

Response..... Frank McKimmey

Chorus..... Sixth Grade

Awarding Elementary School Certificates..... D. C. Hastings

Awarding Junior High School Diplomas..... D. C. Hastings

Announcements.

The program for the end of the 1926-1927 school year for the Elementary and Junior High Schools. F. A. Holt, the minister who gave the Invocation, was the Baptist pastor from 1926 to 1928. O. L. Walker was evidently pastor of the Methodist church. (Courtesy Sullins Library Collection)

Securing a replacement for Hastings was not easy, but the board set about it with dispatch. The records for June 11, 1944, show that a Mr. Allen was invited to come to town to consider the position. Either he did not like the situation or the situation did not like him for he did not accept the position.

Silas D. Snow had been principal at the last Crossett Camp School and had also taught in the high school in Crossett. He was now superintendent at Corning. Snow was an able school man with a good statewide reputation. He was a graduate of Arkansas State Teachers College (now University of Central Arkansas) and had done considerable graduate work in other universities. He accepted the Crossett position when it was offered to him.

The administration of Silas D. Snow continued the tradition of excellence begun by D. C. Hastings near the beginning of the century. Before Snow arrived, there had been only one building outside the traditional site around the new school, the new White School, as it was first called. However, he came in an era when the town was growing rapidly due to the fact that the residents could buy their homes for the first time and businesses were expanding. The cluster of green buildings between Oak and Beech Streets along with the one White School were no longer sufficient for the accelerating population. The school board and Snow soon planned a new high school near what was then the south end of town. This new facility was a three-story concrete and brick building with a large gymnasium. The new building was so huge that everyone thought the city would never need more school space.[16]

Snow's administration saw the construction of the new T. W. Daniel High School, a modern one-story brick structure for blacks. The school system still needed a new gymnasium at the T. W. Daniel School, additional space for grade school pupils in various parts of the city, and an auditorium for cultural events. These things were in the future but Snow and the board were already planning.

Snow was elected president of the Arkansas Educational Association in 1950, the highest honor the Association could then bestow. Another indication of Snow's standing among his contemporaries is the fact that they sent him on a tour of Europe to study their educational systems. In the meantime, he had been granted an honorary doctorate by State Teachers

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College. After leaving Crossett, Snow was elected president of his alma mater, State Teachers College, and served until his retirement, overseeing the greatest building program in the college's history. Snow's administration of the Crossett schools may have been more difficult than some because of the speedy transitions necessary in a rapidly growing town and economy.[17]

The third superintendent of the educational system in Crossett was M. H. Russell, who followed Snow from the Lake Village system. Though building continued with the erection of a Civic Auditorium, the building of the Oakhurst Elementary School and the erection of a more modern high school on 9th Avenue, Russell's chief contribution was perhaps in curriculum development. Discipline was also one of Russell's strong points and most citizens pointed to this fact with pride. The curriculum was so developed that fifty percent of the high school graduates went on to college.

Russell was active in local civic activities as well as in educational circles over the state. He was a member of the First United Methodist Church. He served as president of the Rotary Club, the Lions Club and the Arkansas Education Association.

He also received a lifetime honorary membership in the Boys Scouts of America. Russell had an honorary doctorate from Hendrix College. He was elected president of Henderson State University where he served from 1963 until his death in 1969. The Fine Arts Building on the Henderson campus is named for him.[18]

The second longest tenure of a superintendent of schools in Crossett is held by Hugh Willis, elected to succeed M. H. Russell when he became president of Henderson in 1963. Willis, promoted from principal of the high school, held the post of superintendent from 1963 until April 1980. This is the only school system Willis ever taught in, having come here soon after discharge from the Army where he served as a drill sergeant. According to him, it was during his Army stint that Willis decided to become a teacher.[19] The tenure of Hugh Willis, though not quite as long as that of Superintendent Hastings, has been constructive, colorful, and ambitious to a degree that would have delighted the heart of the real founder of the Crossett school system.

Willis came to Crossett in Janua
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We are just going to do it."

(Photo opposite page) Pictured here in 1947
of the Crossett Parent-Teacher Association w
D. Snow. First row, seated (l.-r.): Miss Gussi
a principal who had an elementary school n
LeBrocq, Mrs. E. L. White, Mrs. Richard Jo
Miss Sue Martin, Mrs. W. N. Toole. Second ro
Mrs. W. C. Norman, Snow, Mrs. Earl Wall
*Mrs. Silas D. Snow. (*Forest Echoes *Files)*

Willis came to Crossett in January, 1948, as a social science teacher in junior high school, then located in the old green school.[20] Willis taught social science in the high school from 1948 through 1950 and became principal of the junior high school in 1950, then principal of the high school in 1951. In only two years he was promoted from junior high social science teacher to high school principal.

One of the first problems facing Willis was the federally ordered integration of all schools in the system. When the board met to consider the situation, Willis told them that they could take one of three courses: 1. wait for the court to order integration; 2. lead the way forward; or 3. study the situation and strive to do it on a local basis as they wished. It was decided that, since it had to be done and might be better for everyone anyway, it would be best to implement the program immediately but without undue haste. Accordingly, committees totaling 100 people were appointed from all over the community representing all interested groups. In the meantime, he drew up a plan and let the committees discuss it thoroughly. The plan was to implement the integration program of the government and to do it completely and impartially.

When the entire committee met to discuss the program, members listened eagerly and thoughtfully, and perhaps fearfully. However, by this time it was evident to all informed citizens that integration was the way of the present as well as the future.[20]

When the discussion was almost over, one of the original opponents said, "If it has to be done, this is the best way to do it." Apparently it was the way to do it, for it worked.

Willis said, however, that he personally talked to every teacher and told them, "It is not a question of liking the plan. We are just going to do it."

(Photo opposite page) Pictured here in 1947 is the Executive Board of the Crossett Parent-Teacher Association with Superintendent Silas D. Snow. First row, seated (l.-r.): Miss Gussie Price, teacher and later a principal who had an elementary school named for her, Mrs. E. F. LeBrocq, Mrs. E. L. White, Mrs. Richard Jones, Mrs. R. D. Tucker, Miss Sue Martin, Mrs. W. N. Toole. Second row: Mrs. Adelbert Duskin, Mrs. W. C. Norman, Snow, Mrs. Earl Wallick, Mrs. Leslie Jeffress, Mrs. Silas D. Snow. (Forest Echoes *Files)*

With that kind of preparation of the citizens, black and white, and such straight talk to all teachers, the plan was on its way. Willis says there was a minimum of trouble with either students or parents over the matter and a maximum of cooperation. There was no disturbance or organized resistance. Teachers, parents and pupils cooperated, and many of them were surprised that no untoward incidents occurred and school went on as usual.

Willis said of the integration experience from his viewpoint, "It was a most difficult experience but also the most rewarding."

These four men were prominent in Crossett education for many years. (l.-r.): M. H. Russell, superintendent, his successor Hugh Willis, then principal, William C. Norman, School Board chairman and later a Board member at the University of Central Arkansas, and Austin White, former teacher and later financial officer for the Crossett schools. (Courtesy of Crossett Schools)

Miss Carrie Calhoun, on May 26, 1948, makin for a gift of her home deeded to her by contributi dents. Miss Calhoun began teaching in the first in 1907 and retired after more than forty ye Elementary School is named for her. (Forest

*Miss Carrie Calhoun, on May 26, 1948, making her acceptance speech for a gift of her home deeded to her by contributions from her former students. Miss Calhoun began teaching in the first unit of the Green School in 1907 and retired after more than forty years of service. Calhoun Elementary School is named for her. (*Forest Echoes *Files)*

After he assumed office as superintendent the school program and the schools themselves grew by leaps and bounds. Much of this growth and development of curriculum and staff are due to financial help from the federal government but much of it is due to the wholehearted response of citizens. The faculty has increased by sixty-five or seventy members, and the budget has increased five hundred percent. The only discouraging feature is that the enrollment has not increased in proportion to the financial development. The enrollment has grown in this time about 300-400 students. However, people are not having large families and the population of the city has not greatly increased. Many additions have been made to the physical plant since Willis became superintendent. The gymnasium, begun under Russell, was completed. There was a four-room addition to the Price Elementary School and after it burned the school was rebuilt. The Anderson School in the extreme eastern part of town has been built. Administration offices and a library have been added at the Daniel School. One of the most outstanding improvements was the building of an elementary school in North Crossett.

Many more improvements are recorded. The band hall at the high school has been enlarged, there is a new Price Elementary School building and an addition to the administration building has just been completed. A new band shell has been completed at the football field and aluminum seats have been installed on one side. The bus garage has been added to. Three portable buildings have been bought and are now in use. Though enrollment is not increasing rapidly, the range and content of education is constantly being enriched to meet the needs of our rapidly advancing civilization and better prepare the pupils for either college or positions in industry.

In the educational phase, calculus has been added as well as analysis. Every child now has to take oral grammar to prepare for a better social and professional life. In process now is a program of effective teaching, designed to teach teachers how to teach better. Crossett will be one of the first ten schools in the state to inaugurate this program for better teaching. The school is also looking into promoting a program for gifted students.

A community education program was inaugurated in 1980 for adults. Basic education classes will be taught.

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Robert E. Cr
Crosset

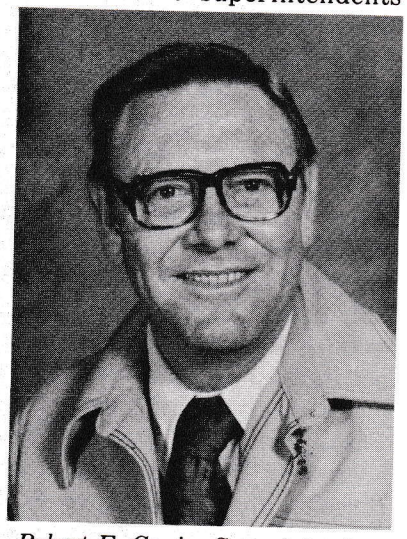
In order to assure this continued development of the better educational program, a comprehensive staff develop
been instituted, called P.E.T., Progra
Teaching. This program was developed

Emphasis will be placed upon recreation but also on whatever the adults wish to learn. The purpose is to help adults, who in return will aid the school.

In concluding this interview, the writer asked Willis for an evaluation of his career in the Crossett Schools and he said, "It has been a most rewarding experience for me. I have reached more people than I would have in any other profession. I always said I would not teach and I became interested in teaching while in the Army as a drill instructor. This has been the first and only community I have taught in. I do not regret a single day."

The Crossett High School is still a member of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges. This is the highest rating any school in the state can attain. All phases of the program are excellent, though there are spots in which improvement may be needed and will most likely be implemented.[21]

Robert E. Crain was selected superintendent of schools when Hugh Willis retired in 1980. Like superintendents before him, Crain is dedicated to educational excellence in the schools of Crossett and has prepared himself to determine that such a program of excellence is maintained. He says that the system has kept up with educational changes to keep the schools equal to any in the state or nation. The major goal of the administration is to see that this trend continues through modern facilities and curriculum.[22]



Robert E. Crain, Superintendent
Crossett Public Schools

In order to assure this continued development of the better educational program, a comprehensive staff development program has been instituted, called P.E.T., Program for Effective Teaching. This program was developed by Dr. Madeline

Hunter of the University of California at Los Angeles. In her development of the program, she and her staff selected 1,000 master teachers for study. She and her staff went to the classrooms and observed what made the best teachers effective.

In this study, they found six components of the total effective teaching act: 1. planning skills, 2. classroom management, 3. instructional skills, 4. knowledge of content, 5. human relations skills, and 6. selection and use of materials. Successful teachers, they found, had these skills in common. This group of educators found five essential components to good instruction: 1. select the correct objective for your level, 2. teach to that specific objective, 3. maintain the focus of the learner on learning, 4. monitor and adjust, 5. use without abusing the principle of learning. This is the program now being instituted here as rapidly as possible.

When Dr. Don Roberts, director of the Arkansas Department of Education, wished to bring this program to Arkansas, Crossett eagerly volunteered to become a pilot school. Crain, Jim Bob McCormick and Dr. Susan Clark first took the courses in preparation to teach to the entire system. The program is taught to the teachers during regular teaching hours with three cycles of teachers taking the program each year. The program does work and improves instruction, which is the objective of the school system.

The school system under Crain is now developing a long-range plan for facilities. There are no current plans to add schools, but if the town continues to expand as in recent years that will be essential. Right now the most urgent need is probably to replace the old Calhoun School, a massive, uninsulated wooden structure. It is historically valuable and beautiful but not in keeping with today's educational needs.

Crain has high praise for the present school board: Don Park, president; Joe Bridgeforth, vice president; J. Ben Posey, secretary; W. C. Hargraves; and Betty Ripley. The board has three main goals: 1. improve discipline through motivation toward discipline, 2. take a long look at new methods of education before committing the schools to them and 3. concentrate on the four R's, the usual three R's and the added R, Respect for teachers, pupils and parents.

Under the administration of Crain, the schools seem bound to continue improving.

Notes on Chapter F

1 *Forest Echoes*, (December, 1958).
2 *The News Observer*, Janice Clark, May 21,
3 *Ibid.*, George Gray, December 8, 1955.
4 *Ibid.*
5 School Board Minutes for April, 1907.
6 *Ibid.*
7 *Ibid.*, May 8, 1909.
8 *Ibid.*, March, 1911 and April 19, 1911
9 *Ibid.*, July 26, 1911.
10 *Ibid.*, September 14, 1914.
11 School Board Minutes for March 25, 1920.
12 *Forest Echoes*, (October, 1957).
13 School Board Minutes for October 22, 193
14 Interview with Mrs. J. W. Buckner, City L
School graduate.
15 School Board Minutes for July, 1944.
16 *The News Observer*, Janice Clark, May 21,
17 *Ibid.*
18 Buckner, *Wilderness Lady*, p. 154.
19 Interview with Hugh Willis, March 26, 19
20 *Ibid.*
21 *Ibid.*
22 *Ibid.*
23 Interview with Robert E. Crain, February

Notes on Chapter Four

[1] *Forest Echoes*, (December, 1958).
[2] *The News Observer*, Janice Clark, May 21, 1959.
[3] *Ibid.*, George Gray, December 8, 1955.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] School Board Minutes for April, 1907.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*, May 8, 1909.
[8] *Ibid.*, March, 1911 and April 19, 1911
[9] *Ibid.*, July 26, 1911.
[10] *Ibid.*, September 14, 1914.
[11] School Board Minutes for March 25, 1920.
[12] *Forest Echoes*, (October, 1957).
[13] School Board Minutes for October 22, 1931.
[14] Interview with Mrs. J. W. Buckner, City Librarian and Crossett High School graduate.
[15] School Board Minutes for July, 1944.
[16] *The News Observer*, Janice Clark, May 21, 1959.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] Buckner, *Wilderness Lady*, p. 154.
[19] Interview with Hugh Willis, March 26, 1980.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] Interview with Robert E. Crain, February 12, 1981.

CHAPTER 5

Churches

The story of religion in Crossett is shrouded in mystery, but the story of the churches, especially the first two churches, is a bit more definite. All around the new sawmill town in 1900 and immediately afterward were organized churches. Methodists had a congregation about four miles southwest of town and there were Baptists on every side. The Unity Church about four miles east was then probably the most influential but there was also a church in White and others just a few miles north of the new sawmill. Hamburg, the county seat, a few miles northeast, had thriving churches of Methodist and Baptist persuasion. Moreover, wandering preachers and circuit riders frequently stopped over for a night or a weekend to help supply the spiritual needs of a rambunctious sawmill town, a tent city without much law or modern conveniences.

According to *The Morning Glory* by Cora Gannaway Williams, a deaconess formed a class of men in a boxcar and taught them to read and write. The writer says that the company employed a deaconess to help employees and employers keep on good terms. One deaconess was named May Kenny.[1] Though Cap Gates was prosecutor, judge and jury, he probably welcomed help from the deaconesses.

Forest Echoes for March, 1959, says that the floating population for one hundred miles around came to the new sawmill on account of the higher wages paid mill hands. Tents were

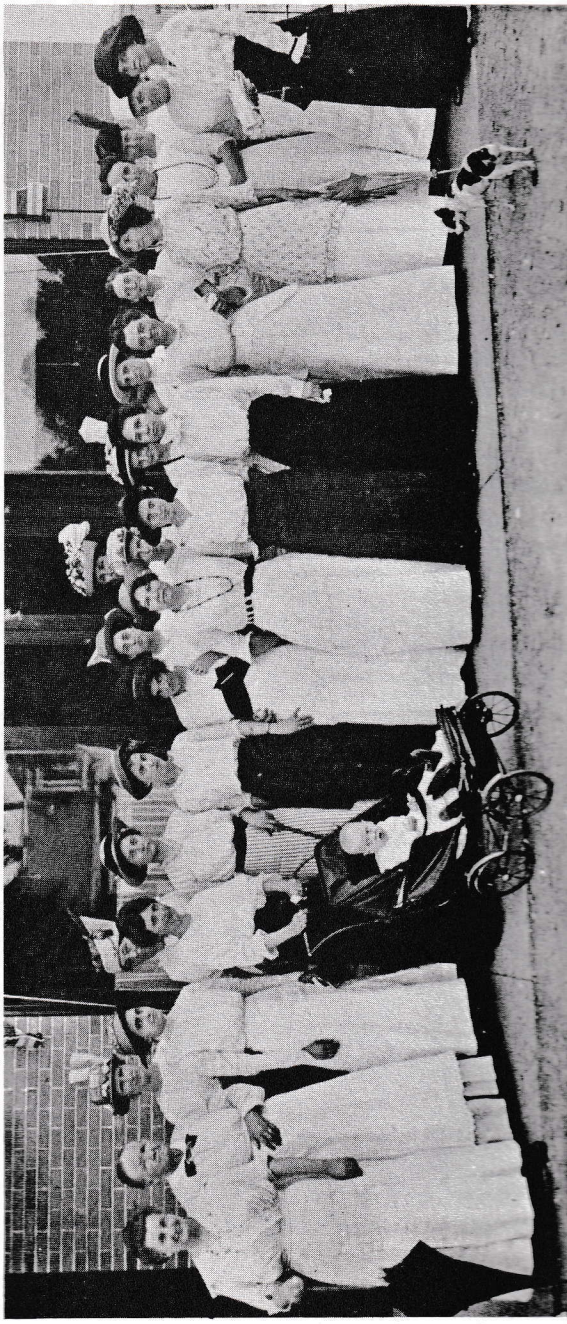
pitched on First and Second Streets without regard to anything but distance from the next tent. Stumps filled the streets and mud was a constant problem in wet weather. Meanwhile the mill began to cut timber for the first houses. In this rough and fragile situation, far from any kind of police authority, Cap Gates was forced to keep order.[2]

Chapter Two recounts how Crossett's first church was built almost overnight in order to prevent a saloon from opening. However, this first church was also a school. One picture of the building seems to indicate that there was some kind of bell tower on the roof near the front. That would be in keeping with custom of the times in calling pupils to their classes and worshippers to services.[3]

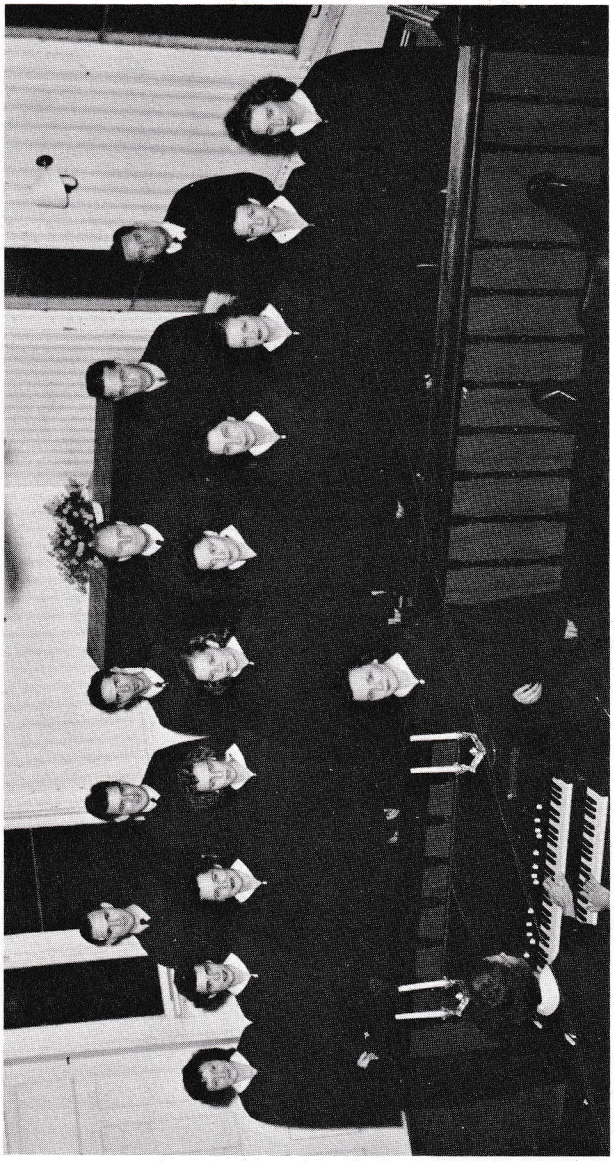
As valuable as this building was in getting a church in the town, it only served two years. A drive was begun to gather money for a new church building and the company donated land at 208 Main. The building was dedicated June 19, 1904.[4] According to the church records and the *News Observer* for May, 1959, the first pastor was Reverend A. M. Shaw and the building was dedicated by a Bishop Key.

This first church had twenty-eight charter members in Crossett though in a very short time there were many more. The charter members were John J. Aiken, Mrs. John J. Aiken, C. C. Carroll, Jordan L. Crow, Tom V. Crow, Dr. Louis M. Crow, Miss Mame Crow, Howard Crow, Mrs. E. A. Deuty, John J. Gaddy, Mrs. Rose M. Gates, Emma Howell, Z. T. Pennington, G. C. Lawrence, Jesse Lawrence, Emmett Lawrence, Eugene Lawrence, Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Mann, J. I. Mann, A. M. Mann, Miss Willow Mann, W. A. Miller, Eva Miller, J. W. McKinney and Mrs. Fannie Norcott. One wonders why Cap Gates is not mentioned as a charter member. However, his omission may be an error since he was the moving spirit in the whole undertaking.[5]

The most striking feature of the new house of worship from the outside was a beautiful bell tower and a huge copper bell to call worshippers to services. Inside was a large sanctuary and many rooms for the already growing Sunday School. Stained glass windows added immeasurably to the beauty of the church house and it stood on the corner of what was then Main Street and Gates Avenue, for many years in the middle of town, accessible for any purpose at any time of day or night.



The Methodist Ladies Missionary group is standing in front of the drug store located in the Masonic building about 1915. (l.-r.): Mrs. C. D. Oslin, Mrs. Elmore, Mrs. Harry Thornton, unidentified, Mrs. Barrell, unidentified woman with baby, Sudie Walker (?), unidentified, unidentified, Mrs. Marie Hancock, Mrs. H. Easterling, Mrs. D. C. Hastings (in rear) (?), Mrs. A. T. Sparks, unidentified, Mrs. E. W. Gates, Miss Henry (Deaconess), Mrs. Uley Welch, Mrs. S. T. Cobb, Mrs. G. H. Setzler, Mrs. Charlie Switzer, Mrs. George Lessor, Mrs. Hellum (hat with feather), Mrs. H. C. Rule, unidentified. (Forest Echoes *Files*)



The Methodist Church Choir in 1945 as they presented their Christmas Cantata, "The Light Eternal." (l.-r.): Eunice Anderson, Organist; Elaine Parkhill, Choir Director. Front row: Katherine Moore, Mary Helm, Oneida Tull, Ruth Rawls, Julia Alice Oakleaf, Mabel Bird, Helen Simpson, Nadine Pratt, Ruth Chesley, Blanche Hancock. Back row: Joe Paulk, Kenneth Dorland, Leslie Jeffress, Rob Roy McGregor, Dick Meredith, Whit Anderson. The musical program was given in the old church. (Forest Echoes *Files*)

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Jones, T. M. Walsh, Mrs. Earl Rice, Mrs. Joh
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building cost $150,000. Much has been adde
since the initial structure, such as a fellow
dren's wing, an administration building and
B. K. Carr was superintendent of constru
Holmes was the pastor and moving spirit in

A picture in *Forest Echoes* and the Scra
men who cleared the site for the new buil

Through the years until this building was torn down the church ministered to the town admirably with all the organization of a modern Methodist Church. Worship services were held weekly and Sunday School boomed most of the time while the ladies' work prospered and the choirs continually lifted voices heavenward. The Scrap Book now used by the Methodist Church has a picture of an early Sunday School class. It shows, about 1906, Dewey Erwin, Ed Gates, a Mr. Brown, John Rule, Paul Crow, Jessie Dooley, Ira McCaskill, Harvey Courson, Don Caldwell, Earl Rice, Overall Rafferty and the teacher, L. L. Honeycutt. From the same Scrap Book, we have a picture showing a choir for 1943. It consisted of Kathryn Moore, Mary Helm, Mrs. Wade Tull, Ruth Rawls, Julia Alice Oakleaf, Mable Bird, Helen Simpson, Nadine Pratt, Ruth Chesley, Blanche Dubose, Elaine Parkhill, Eunice Anderson, Joe Paulk, Kenneth Darland, Leslie Jeffress, Rob Roy McGregor, Richard Meredith and Whit Anderson.

Among the members of this Sunday School class and choir were some of the great men and women of Methodism and pioneers in building the city. By the time the picture of the choir was taken in 1943, however, members began to see that another building was essential if the church was to do its best work.[6] Consequently, D. C. Hastings, a leader of long standing in the church as well as schools, made a motion that they build a new church house. The motion carried and Hastings was made chairman of the building committee. However, Hastings moved to Little Rock soon and Edwin T. Bird was made chairman in his place. Other members of this building committee were Leroy White, Rob Roy McGregor, W. A. Phillips, Richard Jones, T. M. Walsh, Mrs. Earl Rice, Mrs. John T. Erwin, Mrs. A. T. McDonough and J. B. White. The building committee and all members worked hard to raise money for the new structure. When they felt ready to begin construction the company gave $30,000 and a new site. Ultimately, the new building cost $150,000. Much has been added to the building since the initial structure, such as a fellowship hall, a children's wing, an administration building and a new parsonage. B. K. Carr was superintendent of construction and O. E. Holmes was the pastor and moving spirit in construction.

A picture in *Forest Echoes* and the Scrap Book shows the men who cleared the site for the new building. They were

Leroy White, Nelson Toler, Jewell Childers, Claude West, Edwin Bird, B. K. Carr, Earl Rice and the Reverend O. E. Holmes.[7]

The first construction at the new site was a main sanctuary of Gothic design with a unit in the same design on each side for educational purposes. Over the center building, which is the main sanctuary, is a bell tower and into that tower the bell from the old church was placed in special ceremonies. This bell is now electronically activated and rings out the time periodically. So far as we could find, the bell is the only item salvaged and moved from the building that stood on the corner of Main and Third Streets so long.

Though the little building erected to keep out the saloon was an interdenominational church as well as a school for all, it could not long accommodate two churches. It simply was not large enough and services often had to be at the same hours for Methodist and Baptists. Therefore, the Baptist Church soon moved to a dwelling at 310 Oak Street with the Reverend N. C. Denson as pastor. The Reverend Denson held services two Sundays a month. He was a pioneer minister and drove during this time from Dermott to hold services here. Brother Denson's services were successful, for more and more members joined the Baptist group. Services were held in the Oak Street residence about two years until the members agitated for a building of their own.

During the summer of 1905, a revival was held on the corner of Beech and Gates Avenue under a brush arbor and interest in a church building and a church organization grew rapidly. Consequently, in the spring of 1906, the First Baptist Church was organized with the following charter members: Mr. and Mrs. Sam Linder, Mr. and Mrs. R. M. Courson, Mr. and Mrs. Will Denton, Misses Nina and Ida Pennington and J. M. Willis. These nine members of the new Baptist Church began in earnest to collect money and otherwise plan for the erection of a house of worship. In the fall of 1907, ground was cleared at Beech Street and Gates Avenue for the new building. Members gave one day a week to work on the building.[8]

The Crossett Lumber Company gave dollar for dollar in support of this new religious effort and in addition gave the lot for the building. C. D. Oslin, father of Mrs. John Cooper, was

the first Sunday School Superintendent. The
Deloach was called as pastor and the State
supplemented his salary. The first service in t
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the first Sunday School Superintendent. The Reverend M. D. Deloach was called as pastor and the State Mission Board supplemented his salary. The first service in the new building was held by the Reverend Denson and his text was "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Two members were added to the church at this time, Mrs. J. M. Willis and Mrs. Will Fletcher. The following Sunday a revival began and fifty members were added to the church.

The first building of the First Baptist Church was much like the Methodist Church except for the absence of a bell tower. It had a commodious sanctuary, classrooms on each side and in the rear, and balconies in front of the pulpit and on the left side. Sunday School rooms were on the left upstairs. In later years seating was with opera chairs, upholstered. There was a center row of seats and two aisles to the right and left of the pulpit. The baptistry was immediately behind the pulpit, enabling all in attendance to see the minister immersing candidates for church membership. To the left of the pulpit which faced south was a classroom separated from the sanctuary by a sliding partition. This for many years was the only men's Bible class in the church.

The building was of fine pine lumber and painted white and a gabled vestibule projected beyond the front of the church. On the west side of the main building were five stained glass windows below and four above, while on the south were four stained glass windows with one large round stained glass window above them. The gables were high and the roof steep, helping make the building very handsome. The position of the vestibule made the church house front on Third Avenue and Beech Street. Later, an educational building of two and a half stories was built adjacent to the sanctuary on the east side.[9]

Through the years this church grew rapidly, and so did churches in the areas around the city. However, the need for other churches was apparent and in 1940 the church organized a mission at Locke School House. This mission closed in 1950.

In 1941 the church established a mission in North Crossett with a mission Sunday School of 133. This mission soon developed into a thriving church and was named First Baptist Church of North Crossett. In the 1940's there was for a time a mission in or near South Crossett at the Harris School House.

When the South Crossett Baptist Church developed, the mission at Harris School House was abandoned. Later, in 1949 and 1950 the Reverend J. W. Buckner began preaching to the people at Johnson's Mill and finally held a revival under a brush arbor which resulted in the formation of a church called the Second Baptist Church. The Reverend Harold White, associate pastor, assisted Brother Buckner in this venture.

The First Baptist Church began in 1907 at the corner of Beech Street and Third Avenue, then called Gates Avenue. This building was in use until a new one was erected in 1949 to accommodate a membership of 1,386. The members of the building committee for the new church was composed of C. F. Tatum, John Henry Allen, Carl Love, John Anders, and George Alcorn. (Sullins Library Collection)

When the Crossett Lumber Company decided to sell all the houses in the city in 1946, the church and the town began a very rapid growth. During the pastorate of the Reverend Williford Lee, the church continued a campaign to raise money for a new building to be located at Main Street and Eighth Avenue. According to custom, the company participated in this project by donating the land and $30,000. By 1949 funds were adequate to begin the construction of a new and larger edifice. Membership of the church then was 1,386.[10]

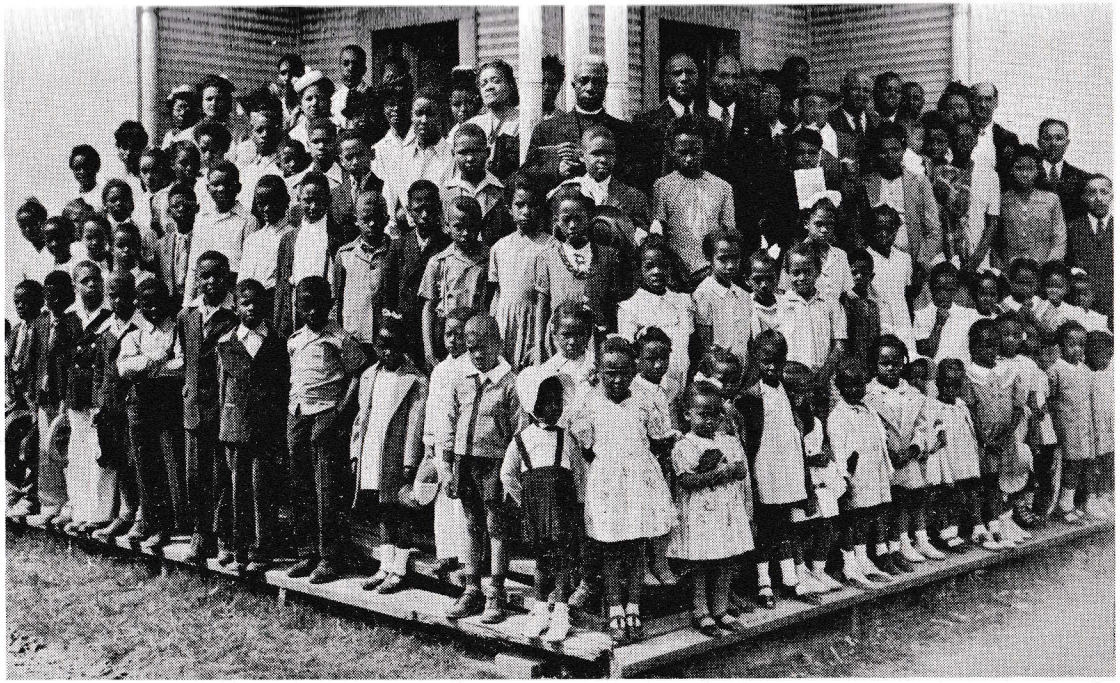
The Baptist Ladies Sunday School Class in 1930 by the side of the church. The two men kneeling at the front are Travis Bryant and the pastor, W. E. Warren. Front row (l.-r.): Gladys Sparkman. Bessie Linder, Marie Allen, Esther White, Mrs. Elsie Grubbs, Mrs. Clara Brennon, Mattie Dell George, Genie Belle Cartledge, Moree Phillips. Second row: Ida Algood, Nell Jones, Mrs. Wilson, Clara Fuglaar, Zaidee Morris, Mrs. Snow, Dovie Stuart, Pearl Burt, Ruth Walker, Mrs. Warren, Jewell Cooper, Annie Kate Malloy, Helen Moffatt. Third row: Vennie Mae Dooley, Flossie Bryant, Mrs. Bayliss, Clyde Ludlum, Mrs. Stevenson, Grace Shipley, Hattie Mae Burt, Ollie Lee Sims, Mrs. Willis (?), Ethel Burgess, Ophelia Ellen Gardner, Anna Campbell. (Sullins Library Collection)

The building committee for this sanctuary's construction was C. F. Tatum, chairman; John Henry Allen; Carl Love; John Anders; George Alcorn, and J. W. Buckner, pastor. This building is of solid masonry and has a tall steeple and huge windows beautifully draped. In the center of the steeple before it tapers sharply is a huge stained glass window, and a columned porch runs the width of the sanctuary. Since the original building, three huge educational buildings and a recreation center have been added. The sanctuary seats 1,200 and the furnishings are most modern and beautiful.

This church has sent eleven men into the ministry: Paul Ragland, Paul Mitchell, C. L. Howard, Bill Elton, Emmitt Wren, Quincy Mathis, Don Jones, Jack Gulledge, E. E. Fulton, Phillip Bowles, and Edwin Pinkston. For many years the church supported Guerney Harris as a missionary to Africa and more recently supported Bob Dickerson to Sharpenhoe, England.

Pastors through the years have been: E. M. Denson, 1906-1907; M. D. Deloach, 1907; L. C. McCann, 1908-1909; J. B. Luck, 1910-1914; W. T. King, 1914-1915; Carl Hinton, 1915; Ben Bridges, 1915-1918; O. D. Davis, 1919-1920; Earl Westmoreland, 1920-1925; Blake Smith, 1925-1926; F. A. Holt, 1926-1928; W. E. Warren, 1929-1932; T. H. Berry, 1932-1939; Aubrey C. Halsell, 1940-1941; Williford Lee, 1942-1948; J. W. Buckner, 1948-1952; Robert L. Smith, 1953-1956; Gerald T. Smith, 1957-1958; B. G. Hickem, 1959-1966; Jerry Don Abernathy, 1966-1970; E. E. Griever, interim, 1970-1971; Homer W. Shirley, Jr., 1971-1977, and Al Sparkman, 1978-present.

On the south side of Second Avenue at Carolina Street is a white frame building now housing the Zion Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church. This building was erected in 1933, or rather rebuilt, for a building had been on the spot almost since the building of the town. At the time of rebuilding, the trustees were C. Warren, G. Reynolds, J. Douglas, E. Hawkins, N. Jackson, T. Neal Thrower, and C. Clark. Zion Temple was organized in 1914 or 1915. This church has been in constant service at this historic location for all the intervening years and is now pastored by the presiding elder, the Reverend C. R. Thompson. The church is a member of the African Episcopal Zion Conference which covers all America and has constituents in many foreign countries.[11]



*Gates Chapel is one of the oldest Negro churches in Crossett. Reverend T. C. Trice, standing at top center, is pictured here with members of this Methodist group in 1945. Note the excellent attendance of young people. (*Forest Echoes *Files)*

This location is historic because it has been the location for the First Baptist Church, the Gates Chapel Methodist Church, a school for blacks and now for many years the Zion Temple African Methodist Church. The First Baptist Church and the Gates Chapel Methodist Church worshipped here in the school house on alternate Sundays until each moved to their present locations. At the time the Methodists and Baptists worshipped there it was almost at the western end of town. In 1980 the Stewards were Charlie Freeman, Calvin Warren, Willie Marshall, Larry Harris, and Mrs. Viola Warren. Mrs. Warren, who gave this information, taught school in the Daniel School until 1964 and is now 81. She has served on the board of Stewards many years.

When the saloon attempted to move into Crossett in 1902 and the little frame church building which became the First Methodist Church was built in a day, the Gates Chapel Methodist Church, A.M.E. was already in operation as a Methodist mission for the blacks of Crossett. This makes the Gates Chapel Methodist Church the oldest organized religious group in the city. However, that may be disputed by the First Baptist Congregation on Florida Street because they also were organizing at the same time and met on alternate Sundays in a school house on Second Avenue at the western edge of town. Thus the Methodist Church for blacks and the First Baptist Church for blacks may be the same age.[12]

According to the *News Observer* for May 1959, the Gates Chapel Methodist Church was organized as a mission some time in 1902, and was named the Gates Chapel Methodist Church in honor of Cap Gates and Mrs. Gates because they nurtured it financially in the early years. Worship in the school building with the Baptists on alternate Sundays did not prove to be propitious, so the congregation built a new house of worship at 301 Carolina Street. The Reverend H. M. Deaver was pastor. This frame building served the congregation for fifty years and had as trustees L. W. Davis, Otis T. Switzer, M. Gates, G. Thrower, J. Brooks, B. W. Gibbs, G. Green, F. Baliff and G. J. Ramsour.[13]

When the company decided to sell all residential property in the city and go out of the real estate business in 1946, the congregation began planning a new building at the original site, 301 Carolina and Gates Avenue or Third Street. A very

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The cornerstone on the present brick
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berly, A. Withers, J. Watson, J. W. Will
Boston, W. Jasper, W. E. King, A. Can
Bolar.[15]

able gentleman, the Reverend H. D. Brookins, was named pastor of the church by the conference and the building program proceeded until offerings amounted to $1,000 a month. Accordingly a contract was let for a magnificent gothic house of worship and was completed and in service in 1960. In the new building is a sanctuary of imposing beauty, kitchen and banquet facilities, church offices and ample room for all organizations of the church. It is one of the most beautiful and functionally efficient church buildings for blacks in south Arkansas. At the time of opening the new building the membership was 270 and the church supported all causes and organizations of the conference.[14]

The First Baptist Church on Florida Street is the original Baptist Church for blacks in Crossett and was organized some time in 1902. Like the Methodists, they probably first met in homes and later in the school house on Second Avenue and Carolina Streets. Later the congregation moved to a building erected by the company south of Tin Top. Here, too, they met on alternate Sundays with the Methodists. However, after two years, they moved back to the school house on Second Avenue. In 1909, a revival was held by the congregation and approximately 100 new members were added to the church rolls. This revival meeting was held in a tent on Florida Street. A desire to have their own place of worship became apparent and plans for a new building were discussed. Accordingly the company erected for them a new frame building on Florida Street where the revival had been held. The first trustees of the new congregation were J. L. Edwards, Milton Jackson, Will Johnson, Albert Wright, Wade Johnson, J. A. Cotton, and N. E. Gondon.

The cornerstone on the present brick building where the first First Baptist Church had stood lists the names of the deacons and pastor in 1956, the date of construction of the new commodious sanctuary. The pastor was the Reverend K. B. Long and the deacons were Z. T. White, chairman; J. S. Jordan, E. Colbert, C. Harris, T. King, C. Snowden, W. Sewell, and A. Callaway. The building committee members for this new structure were W. L. LeGrande, chairman; I. Oliver, L. Wimberly, A. Withers, J. Watson, J. W. Williams, E. Adkins, W. Boston, W. Jasper, W. E. King, A. Cann, R. Duke, and E. Bolar.[15]

(Photo opposite page) Construction of a $40,000
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300 block of Pine Street. The church ministe
church leader D. F. Gadberry broke the groun
Members of the Building Committee were Ro
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Crossett. (Courtesy of Earl Madden)

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(Photo opposite page) Construction of a $40,000 Church of Christ building began November 26, 1950, with a groundbreaking ceremony on the 300 block of Pine Street. The church minister, Clifford Yeldell, and church leader D. F. Gadberry broke the ground in a simple ceremony. Members of the Building Committee were Roy Mitchen, O. L. Hays, E. L. Ware, and John E. Parnell. The Church of Christ was the first group after the Baptist Church and the Methodist Church to build in Crossett. (Courtesy of Earl Madden)

The First Baptist Church on Florida Street is of colonial design and brick construction and has a beautiful sanctuary with ample seating capacity. The original building of 1956 had ample room for Sunday School and other organizations of the church but growth has been so rapid that another addition has been made in recent years. Though competition is very keen from many new churches in the area, this historic congregation continues to grow. The First Baptist Church supports all causes and organizations of their conference and nation.

One of the oldest churches in Crossett is the Church of Christ, now located on the corner of Third and Pine Streets. In 1928, members began gospel meetings in the home of Mrs. Clyde Burt and continued meetings in homes for all the intervening years until they moved to the present location. In 1946, the first gospel meeting was held in a tent with Murphy T. Phillips and L. T. Holland in charge. This was a very successful meeting and the church continued to grow. After the town was fully opened up and residences were being sold, the church began planning a building of their own and the Crossett Company donated three lots at Third and Pine Streets for their church facilities. Members of the congregation raised $12,000 and the company donated $12,000. This enabled them to begin building a sanctuary of worship.

As with many of the new churches in the city, the members of the Church of Christ donated most of the labor for their new building. Then, in November 1952, the new facilities were dedicated with the Reverend Bill Cannon as full-time minister. As of May 1959, the church boasted 141 members, a nice brick sanctuary, sufficient educational space and a pastor's home. Ed Sanders was the minister in 1959. At this time the three elders were Earl Baker, Earl Madden, and E. G. Garner. The deacons were Robert Culbreath, M. M. Thomas,

Jr., W. D. Sanders, W. G. Warmack, and Norman Bryant. Additional facilities are constantly being added to the church and its progress continues.[16]

Additional churches had been discouraged during the time the company owned all the homes and businesses in town but when the company sold property to be used in any manner the people chose, churches that had been in the planning stage or meeting outside the city or in homes began to organize and seek locations within the city. Such was the case of the Beech Street Baptist Church, most of whose members had been members of the First Missionary Baptist Church in West Crossett. Beech Street Baptist Church was organized June 3, 1950, and called Elder R. W. Davis as their first pastor. At the time, Edler Davis attended the West Crossett Missionary Baptist Church and the First Baptist Church in the city. The new organization met in homes of members about a year. In 1951, the congregation bought a home at 500 Beech Street and planned to build. In the meantime, they tore out enough partitions in the home for a congregation and built pews. They also repainted the house and refinished the floors.

At this time, the Daniels School was in a building program and the old school house was for sale. The congregation bought the old school house and moved the lumber to the Beech Street site and began building a modern church sanctuary and educational facilities. Members of the church did all the construction except the bricklaying. This building was officially opened soon afterward and continues to serve in Crossett with growing membership and better facilities. Only a few years later a completely new and modern educational plant was opened in the rear of the original building. The second pastor was Elder David Rice. Recently a parsonage was purchased for the pastor and the congregation has had a healthy, continuous growth through the years.[17]

One day in January 1949, J. W. Buckner, pastor of the First Baptist Church was sitting in his office when the Reverend Charlie Robinson walked in and introduced himself as a Presbyterian missionary. Naturally, Mr. Buckner asked the Reverend Robinson what he wished and he replied, "I am looking for stray Presbyterians."

Mr. Buckner replied, smiling "Maybe I can help you, then."

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Buckner, former paster of First Baptist Chur
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set up on Highway 82 in the western part of to
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know what to do, so he ordered a very large
had at the time no money and no organiz
people flocked to the revival under the big te
to hear the minister and many began to se
though at first there was no organization.[20]

Then the Reverend Robinson told his mission to Crossett to see if there might be enough Presbyterians or people inclined to be Presbyterians to constitute a church. The conversation went on for some time and, when the missionary was ready to go, he had a list of names that eventually served as the nucleus for the new Presbyterian Church in Crossett. Until this time, Presbyterians had been welcomed into the other churches in the city. Some attended the First Baptist Church and many regularly attended the First Methodist Church but all were happy to know that there might be a chance that they could have their own building before long.[18]

A few Sundays later, the church assembled in the Jones Funeral Home and organized with forty charter members. Among the families in the new organization were some of the most prominent citizens of the city. Knowing the generosity of the Crossett Company and the need for a building of their own, this small group immediately began planning a church. The company gave them approximately a half block on the east side of Pine Street, just south of the Church of Christ. The company also gave them $9,000 to begin a building program. This handsome colonial building with sufficient organizational space was soon well on the way and opened for worship services on November 19, 1950. The building itself cost $30,000 and the Reverend B. A. Meeks was pastor. The sanctuary seats 120. The members of the building committee at the time of first construction were E. M. Godat, Robert F. McCay and Robert T. Conner.[19]

The Temple Baptist Church on south Florida Street has a colorful history. In 1953 J. W. Buckner and several other men began to talk about building another Baptist Church in the city, which was not the proper thing to do. Accordingly, J. W. Buckner, former paster of First Baptist Church, Porter Creed, Gus Culbreath, Wade Moffatt and others ordered a tent to be set up on Highway 82 in the western part of town. Buckner had held revivals in tents many times previously and seemed to know what to do, so he ordered a very large tent, though they had at the time no money and no organization. Naturally people flocked to the revival under the big tent on the highway to hear the minister and many began to seek membership, though at first there was no organization.[20]

The minister announced that on July 1, 1953, there would be an organizational meeting under the tent at the usual time of worship. So, July 1, 1953, the assembled group who wished to form a new congregation organized and went through the process of becoming a church. They simply declared themselves to be a church and they were from that time on. One of the first acts of the church, however, was to call a pastor and all had expected Mr. Buckner just to assume the office. However, they officially called him as pastor that evening. Billy Allen Wood, a licensed minister at the time, acted as moderator at this important meeting. The revival continued for several days with Mrs. J. W. Buckner and Martha Arrington at the pianos.[21]

The Crossett Company offered the recreation center as a place of worship until the new congregation could build. Revivals were held in this frame building which served as city offices, a bowling alley, and general recreation center. Members were added to the church regularly and the strength of the congregation grew. In the beginning, they adopted a unified budget containing all causes Southern Baptists support and have never failed a single month to give liberally to missions. The first baptismal service was held in Lucas Pond, a reminder that in the not-too-distant-past in the area all baptisms were held in creeks or lakes. Members were added by baptism and by letter and babies were born into the families. The first baby born in a church family was David Chambers, born to Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Chambers.[22]

Members of the new church were anxious for a building of their own and launched a drive for funds. The first building fund offering was August 3, 1963, and the amount donated was $1,117. The second revival after the original tent revival was held under a brush arbor where the sanctuary of the Temple Baptist Church now stands. The evanglist for this revival was a long-time friend of the pastor, the Reverend Shirley Briggs. During this revival and for many weeks thereafter the pastor and other members sought a location. One day the pastor called Paul Kays, town manager, and asked to see some prospective locations. Kays showed many but the most likely was the present location where the revival was held. He learned later that at the same time his men were having prayer meetings about the matter on the old wooden water line near

the church. Kays and the company offered
the church the lots on which the revival was
then an oak thicket.

Soon after this revival, the pastor and b
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In 1900, before there was a church of any
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fifth anniversary on October 7, 1979, "While
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In those early days, mass was celebrated
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the church. Kays and the company offered Mr. Buckner and the church the lots on which the revival was being held. It was then an oak thicket.

Soon after this revival, the pastor and building committee began to seek financing for a new building. They planned to build an educational building first that could also be used for a while as a sanctuary. On this building committee were Gus Culbreath, Sr., Wade Moffatt, Clifton Nelson, Cecil Watson, Charles Russell, and J. W. Buckner, pastor. A revival spirit continued in the church and members were constantly added to the church. The building committee suggested that each member buy a thousand bricks or give that amount of money to the building fund.[23] This drive received the hearty support of the congregation and the bricks were soon all paid for. However, securing the money to pay for other materials and construction was a problem. After many efforts the Commercial Bank of Monticello agreed to loan the church $10,000 to complete their building. This first unit was built and used for all services until the present sanctuary was constructed under the pastorate of J. W. Buckner in 1961. Members of this building committee were Dutch Meredith, P. K, Creed, Louis Temple, Allen Watson, Jack Sullivan, Noel Owens and Sam Oden with J. W. Buckner as pastor. The church continues its tradition of progress in all areas of service and fellowship in 1980 under the able leadership of the Reverend Joel Moody.

In 1900, before there was a church of any denomination in Crossett, the St. Alphonsus Mission was established in Hamburg, just thirteen miles away. According to a history of Holy Cross Catholic Church in Crossett, written for their twenty-fifth anniversary on October 7, 1979, "While Crossett was still a logging town, Carmelite Fathers, Corbatts and Matthew, would journey from McGehee, approximately every two months to serve the handful of American and Mexican Catholics. In 1910, the first mass was celebrated and this continued until 1947, when the Reverend Joseph Enderlin was appointed by Bishop Albert Fletcher to serve St. Mary's Hospital at Dermott and the missions of St. Alphonsus, Hamburg, and St. Luke's, Warren. The mission was moved to Crossett in 1948, and named Holy Cross."

In those early days, mass was celebrated in the chapel of Jones Funeral Home. When the chapel was needed for other

purposes, mass was celebrated on a portable altar in homes of the parishioners. Father Enderlin saw the need for a church in Crossett, but was transferred and Father Martin Busby replaced him and began working toward building a church for Holy Cross. The first mass was celebrated in the new facility on June 13, 1954, and on October 10 of that year the church was dedicated by Bishop Albert Fletcher.[24]

Progress of the church has not abated since and a rectory was purchased in 1962. A second mass was added in 1964 to accommodate the growing number of people attending. In 1969, a new rectory was purchased and a parish council was formed. In 1974, a parish hall was built and there seemed to be sufficient space for all service of the church. This parish hall was dedicated in 1979. Father Charles Hughes became pastor in 1975 and continued the excellent work begun by his predecessors, with the able assistance of the Reverend Callahan.

The anniversary history of the Holy Cross Church fittingly says, "Each of our pastors and sisters has left his or her mark toward developing our parish into what we are and what we have today. The establishment of the Holy Cross Mission, the building of the church, carpeting, first and second organs, purchase of two rectories, building of the hall, formation of the church council, payment of debts, developing our religious education program, and growth, both in numbers and spirituality."

Episcopalians were in Crossett almost from the beginning but they were few and usually worshipped with other congregations until the town was sold and began to progress. Originally the members worshipped in homes of the members and finally began to gather in the girl scout house in 1950.[25] The church was organized in 1950, with only seventeen members, and immediately began planning their building. Bishop R. Bland Mitchell granted the congregation permission to become a mission as far back as 1937, however, which was known as St. Mark's Mission. In the fall of 1951, thirty-one members and guests saw the first confirmation in the new church. The building on Hickory Street is of English design and of wood construction with gray one-by-twelve boards covering the outside wall. It is painted or stained so that it will always retain the primitive-rustic look of the pine forests.

The first class confirmed consisted
Clark, Paul Gilmont, and Ben T. Rol
membership up to 22. At the time, the
second and fourth Sundays at 4:00 p.m.
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The first class confirmed consisted of Nancy Watzek, Ellis Clark, Paul Gilmont, and Ben T. Rolfe, which brought the membership up to 22. At the time, they were meeting on the second and fourth Sundays at 4:00 p.m. The first pastor of the new church was Robert H. Owen, followed by James C. Buckner, who served until 1959, and was followed by Charles B. Hoglan. By this time, the church boasted a membership of 85. Beside the handsome and beautiful sanctuary is an equally handsome parsonage constructed of corresponding rustic wood lumber.

New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church is located at 508 North Georgia Street and is one of the most progressive congregations of the city. New Bethel was established at the old Crossett Camp on Chemanihaupt Creek in 1913, and moved as a congregation to Crossett when the camp moved in 1932. There were then about 150 members, which was a large congregation for that time and place. The pastor at the Crossett Camp was the Reverend J. H. Allen. Today the church worships in a very modern building with complete facilities.

Membership now stands at approximately 560. The property is conservatively estimated at a value of $300,000 and a new sanctuary is being planned beside the present building which will cost approximately $200,000. The Reverend Dr. B. J. Jackson has been pastor of the church for twenty years. His wife Sallie L. Jackson is of special value to the entire ministry of the church. The Reverend Jackson has been honored by his denomination with many awards and has served on practically all important committees and boards of the church. Brother Jackson believes that the future of the church is assured with the continued growth of the city.[26]

One of the more progressive churches of the city, the First Assembly of God Church located on Parkway Drive, had a very humble beginning. According to Mrs. Addie Roberts, widow of the first pastor and now living at 407-B Main, the church was founded in 1942, and the first services were held in the old union building in West Crossett. When the building was rented out to others, the fledgling congregation had to meet in the woods off the old paper mill road. This was very inconvenient since there was no opportunity to hold evening services. However, even here they began to solicit money for a building and response was good. Finally enough money was collected to

begin their building, which they built with their own labor. Sometimes they had only enough money to buy a bit of lumber or perhaps a window, but the building was built on what was then called Stink Creek, where the Calvary Baptist Church now stands.

They moved into the city to Beech Street where they worshipped until 1962, when the lot on Parkway was secured and a modern edifice erected. Some of the early members were Mr. and Mrs. Dee Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. Ira Lochala, Mrs. Salley Hinson, Harry Hodge and the pastor and his family. Ten persons attended their first service in West Crossett.[27]

The Reverend Sam Witt is the present pastor of the church, and his wife is also in the ministry. The Reverend Witt says they have eighty members with others who drop in now and then. They have a budget of $350,000. The official Board is composed of deacons Stanley Cheshier, Perry Kelley, and Jessie Walthall. The trustees are Bill Jackson, Jerry Pinson, and Jerry White. A larger sanctuary is planned in the same location.[28]

The Church of God in Christ is one of the most imposing church edifices in the city and the present pastor is the Reverend Roy Eason Matheney. It is now located on Third Avenue. The membership is approximately 500. This congregation first met in a vacant building near the present site and in 1961 the Reverend Matheney and his friend Brother Davis began building a sanctuary on Mississippi Street. The congregation grew rapidly and in 1969, the Reverend Matheney held a tent revival at Third Avenue and Virginia Street and thirty-five people were saved. When Georgia Pacific made the present location available, the men of the church began construction, money flowed in, and the men did most of the construction themselves.

This imposing and beautiful masonry building has ample Sunday School and office space with a huge sanctuary. The pastor has been honored many times by his denomination, being state evangelist over 110 churches and district evangelist over twenty churches. He is also state coordinator, with his bishop. Present buildings are worth in excess of $250,000.

Another beautiful and active church in Crossett is the First Church of God located at the south end of Main Street and Waterwell Road. The first services in the new building were

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held April 6, 1952, with the Reverend E. F. Brown officiating.[29] The Reverend Brown had been a moving spirit in the organization of the church and supervised construction of the modern edifice. The church had first considered locating next to the First Baptist Church on Main Street, but they thought that as the two congregations grew, the space would become too crowded. This proved to be correct for the First Baptist Church now utilizes the entire area. The old hospital building became available when the Crossett Company decided to build a more adequate facility, and the church bought the old building. The hospital building cost the congregation $5,010, but the company donated $5,000 and the land on which the new building was erected. The First Church of God is a beautiful red brick two-story structure designed by the pastor, the Reverend E. F. Brown. Sixty-five members donated $5,000 for construction and the value of the finished structure was then in excess of $50,000. At the time the exterior was entirely of lumber, and the brick was placed recently.

The present pastor is the Reverend James E. Geahlen, and his congregation is one of the most active and enthusiastic in the city.

According to the bulletin for the dedication service for the new church building of the St. John Lutheran Church, the first pastor was the Reverend Gary Arp. Successive pastors have been the Reverend Don Rothenbush, the Reverend David Denniger and the present pastor, the Reverend Herman Reese.[30]

Early in 1964, Mr. and Mrs. Davis Mortensen surveyed the town to see how many Lutherans might be interested in organizing a congregation. Enough were found to plan services and the group first met in Jones Funeral Home, the first service being conducted July 26, 1964, with the Reverend Victor Atsinger officiating. Twenty-nine people attended this first service. Dr. Mortensen was chosen chairman of the group, Robert Dobbs served as secretary and Mr. Dobbs and Mrs. Mortensen agreed to teach Sunday School.

The group was organized permanently into a church early in 1965, and chose the name St. John Lutheran Church. The church in El Dorado and St. John Lutheran became a joint parish. In 1967, a constitution was adopted and St. John Church became a member congregation of the Lutheran

Church. Building plans were accepted in 1968, and construction was begun in 1969. Of the original membership only Mrs. William Klick remains, but the church has a progressive congregation averaging about forty in worship in one of the most beautiful churches in the city.

The Missionary Baptist Church of South Crossett is pastored by the Reverend James Holdiness. He is a graduate of the Missionary Baptist Seminary of Little Rock and has done graduate work there. The Reverend Holdiness moved to the South Crossett church in November, 1973, and has led them in a most constructive growth. The church built a beautiful colonial style fellowship building in 1977. This handsome building seats one hundred and is also used for Sunday School services. Sunday School attendance averages about one hundred and Baptist Training Service averages from seventy to ninety. The entire facility is debt free. The sanctuary seats 250. Modern Sunday School rooms are built along the sides of the sanctuary with very adequate baptistry facilities.[31]

The South Crossett Missionary Baptist Church was organized July 16, 1943, by Elders R. J. Willis, Carl Farr and John Causey. Charter members of the church were Miss Winnie D. Pennington, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Pennington, Mrs. Sidney Johnson, Sr., Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Williams and Mrs. Elsie Hill Nelson. The church has always been a member of the Bartholomew Missionary Baptist Association.

Notes on Chapter Five

[1] Cora Gannaway Williams, *The Morning Glory*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Methodist Publishing House, 1910), p. 11.
[2] *Forest Echoes*, (March, 1959).
[3] *Ibid.*, (February, 1951).
[4] Y. W. Etheridge, *History of Ashley County*, (Van Buren, Arkansas: Argus Press, 1959), Appendix LXIII.
[5] Methodist Scrapbook, 1980.
[6] Methodist Scrap Book, 1980.
[7] *Forest Echoes*, (September, 1948).
[8] History of First Baptist Church compiled by Gussie Price, 1975.
[9] *Ibid.*, about 1973.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Interview with Mrs. Viola Warren, former teacher and steward.
[12] *The News Observer*, May, 1959.
[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Author's personal knowledge.
[15] Cornerstone on present building.
[16] *The News Observer*, May 21, 1959.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] Buckner, *Wilderness Lady*, p. 30.
[19] *Forest Echoes*, (December, 1950).
[20] J. W. Buckner, former pastor of Temple Bap
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *History of Temple Baptist Church*, Mrs. Trav
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *History of Holy Cross Catholic Church*, Octob
[25] *The News Observer*, December, 1951.
[26] Interview with the Reverend Mr. Jackson, F
[27] Interview with Mrs. Addie Roberts.
[28] The Reverend Sam Witt, Crossett, Arkansas
[29] *Forest Echoes*, (April, 1952).
[30] Bulletin of St. John Lutheran Church, Nove
[31] Directory of South Crossett Missionary Bapt

[14] Author's personal knowledge.
[15] Cornerstone on present building.
[16] *The News Observer*, May 21, 1959.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] Buckner, *Wilderness Lady*, p. 30.
[19] *Forest Echoes*, (December, 1950).
[20] J. W. Buckner, former pastor of Temple Baptist Church.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *History of Temple Baptist Church*, Mrs. Travis Watson.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *History of Holy Cross Catholic Church*, October 7, 1979.
[25] *The News Observer*, December, 1951.
[26] Interview with the Reverend Mr. Jackson, February 11, 1981.
[27] Interview with Mrs. Addie Roberts.
[28] The Reverend Sam Witt, Crossett, Arkansas.
[29] *Forest Echoes*, (April, 1952).
[30] Bulletin of St. John Lutheran Church, November 9, 1969.
[31] Directory of South Crossett Missionary Baptist Church.